少年サンデーコミックス
Scomics

THE COCKPIT
VOLUME 2

松本零士
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

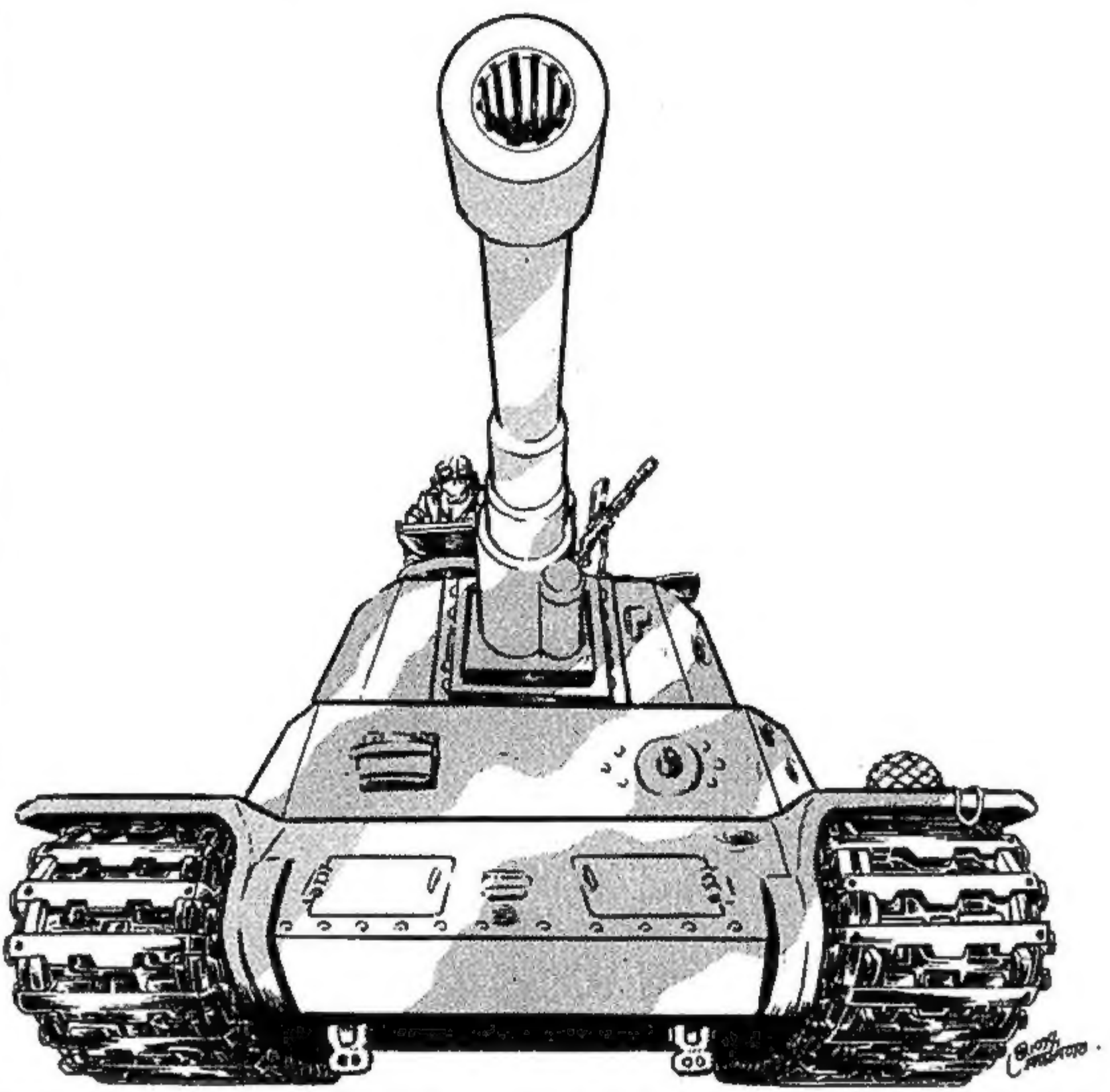
Shonen Sunday Comics

NOTICE!

Japanese comics or *manga* are read from right to left across the page instead of left to right. Also, if your reader supports Japanese *manga* format (back to front instead of front to back) then set it so for easier reading. Thanks!

★ THE COCKPIT - VOLUME ② ★

THE IRON TOMBSTONE
AND OTHER STORIES



松本零士／BY L·MATSUMOTO

THE COCKPIT (aka BATTLEFIELD)
Volume 2: The Iron Tombstone and other stories

by Leiji Matsumoto

a Google Translate® adaptation

English language cleanup
by Richard Mandel

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■松本零士■
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

These are stories of men, women, and the machines of war.

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

THE IRON TOMBSTONE

THE IRON TOMBSTONE

THE BATTLES IN NORTH AFRICA IN 1942 WERE VIOLENT AND FIERCE. HUNDREDS OF NAMELESS TANK CREWS FOUGHT AND DUELED IN THE BLOOD AND SAND. SOME WERE VERY GOOD AND BECAME LEGENDS THANKS TO THEIR SKILL AND MACHINES, AND YET EVEN THESE KNEW THE TRUTH AS WELL AS THE LOWEST TANKER: THAT THEIR MACHINES OF IRON AND STEEL MADE FOR MAKING WAR COULD ALSO DOUBLE AS THEIR COFFINS.

JAP TANK HEADING YOUR WAY. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT STANDARD TYPE 97.

RANGE, 300 METERS!

THIS IS THE HERO POINT OBSERVATION POST, SUSSEX RAPID FIRE ARTILLERY REGIMENT.

FIRE!!!

AND THAT'S ANOTHER CAN OF COOKED JAP, SIR! NO RUDDY ARMOR AT ALL!

THE IRON TOMBSTONE

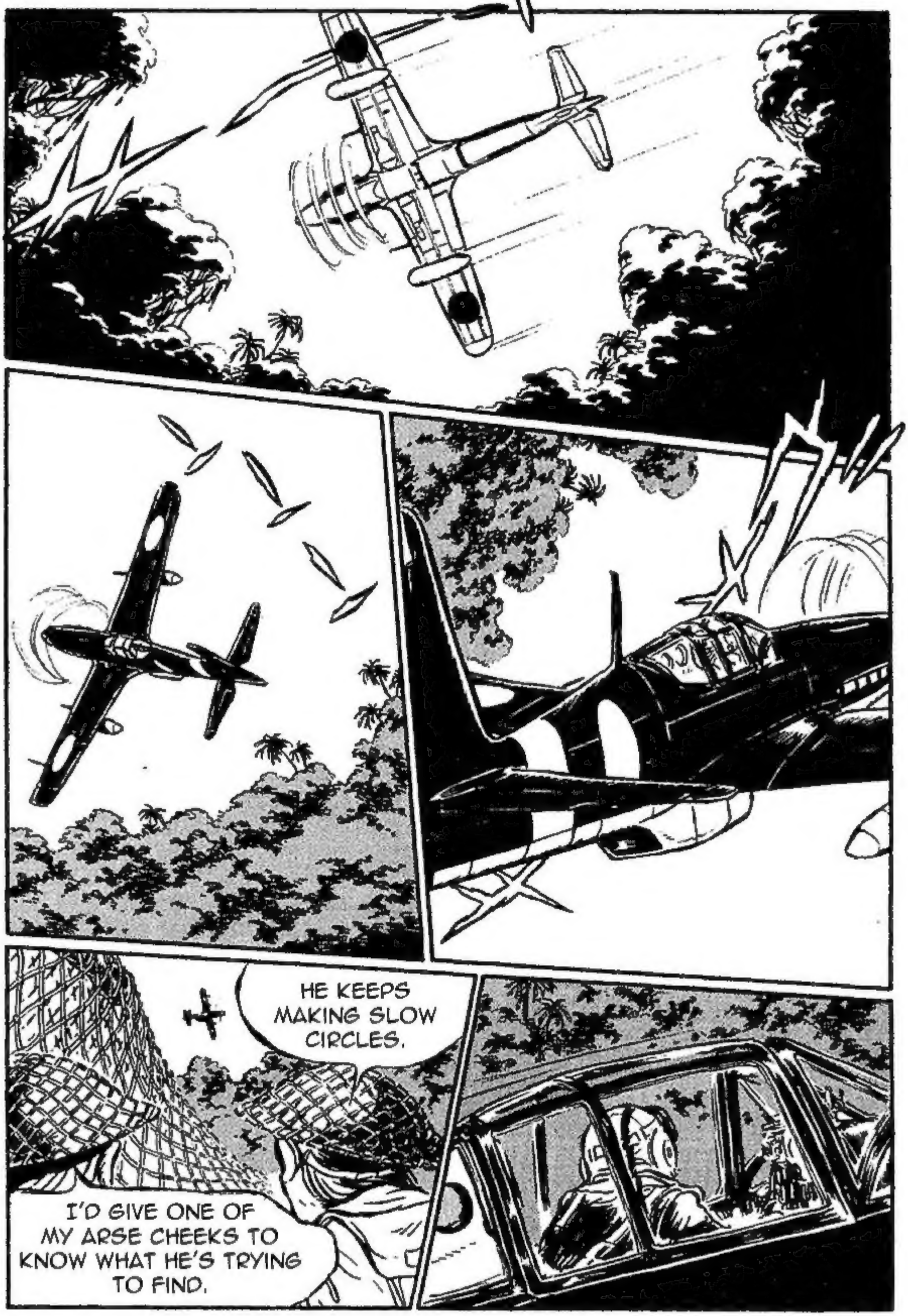
MUST'VE BEEN FOLLOWING IT. HE'S OUT COLD.

SIR, OVER HERE! JAP FOOT SOLDIER!

THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JAP TOY TANK AND A GERMAN MODEL.

SHOULD WE FINISH HIM OFF, SIR? I MEAN--

JAP SPOTTER PLANE! COVER THAT GUN!! BACK UNDER COVER!!!


HE KEEPS MAKING SLOW CIRCLES.
I'D GIVE ONE OF MY ARSE CHEEKS TO KNOW WHAT HE'S TRYING TO FIND.

PLINK!
PLINK!
PLINK!
IT'S RAINING.
ALL RIGHT, PACK IT ALL UP. WE'RE HEADING BACK IN.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, JAP.
... UNHHH ... HELP ...
... HEL ... WHA ...

I WAS WALKING ... AND NOW I'M HERE ....

DID ITS AMMO ...? NO ... IT MUST'VE BEEN ... BUT WERE ARE THEY NOW?

... TH-THE TANK! BUT HOW?! THERE ... THERE WASN'T ANY ...

IT'S RAINING AND WHOEVER DID THIS IS LONG GON--

ALRIGHT. STOP. YOU'VE GOT A CONCUSSION. CALM DOWN.

OH SHIT!

PA-KANGNGNG!!!

THERE'S BRITISH EVERYWHERE. AND FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT ...

HEY, BUDDY, YOU ALL RIGHT?! LOOK, I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THAT!

... NOT ... AGAIN ...

SURE! NO PROB!

PLEASE DON'T CALL ME "BOY." ANYWAY THANKS FOR THE OFFER.

I'M REALLY SORRY! LOOK, BOY, HERE'S MY HELMET! OOPS. TOO BIG.

... DO I ... LOOK BRITISH? ... ... OOOHH ... AND I THOUGHT I HAD A HEADACHE BEFORE ...

THEY TOLD ME TO GO WITH THAT TANK AND RADIO IN "WHEN WE FOUND IT," ONLY THEY NEVER TOLD US WHAT "IT" WAS. NOT EVEN THE TANK COMMANDER KNEW.

I WAS ON SPECIAL DETAIL AS A FOOT SPOTTER.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING, LYING BACK THERE IN THE MUD LIKE THAT?

YOU KNOW, THEY'RE LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHIN' TOO! GOT SEARCH TEAMS OUT ALL OVER!

JUST BE GLAD I FOUND YOU BEFORE THE BRITISH DID.

SOUNDS ALL HUSH-HUSH AND TOP SECRET TO ME. OH WELL, THAT'S THAT.

OTHER THAN YOU, THAT PLANE, THAT TANK, AND THE BRITS? NO.

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING THAT'S STRANGE OR UNUSUAL AROUND HERE?

THEN AGAIN, I HAVEN'T BEEN LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE.

MMMH!

THANKS A LOT.

HAVING A SNACK.

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YOU SAID YOU SAW A PLANE?
PTUI! BLERGH! TASTES AS BAD AS IT LOOKS!
I WONDER IF IT WAS TRYING TO FIND WHAT WE WERE.
YEAH, ONE OF OURS. CIRCLED FOR HOURS UNTIL ITS FUEL RAN LOW.
LET'S GET TO COVER IN CASE IT'S THE BRITISH COME BACK!
HEY, I HEAR SOMETHIN'!
A LONE TOMMY. WEIRD.

I HEARD THE BRITISH HAVE GOOD RIFLES.

DIG THAT RIFLE. IT'S A REAL MUSEUM PIECE.

OR MAYBE HE'S LOOKIN' FOR THE SAME THING THE REST OF YOU ARE.

MAYBE HE GOT SEPARATED FROM HIS UNIT. YOU THINK?

WELL, NOT EXACTLY.

LIKE US AND THE ARISAKA?

THE ONLY REASON THAT THE BRITISH KEEP ON USING ENFIELDS IS BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS HAVE!

THE ENFIELD IS SHORT LIKE YOUR TYPE 99 WHICH MAKES BOTH OF 'EM EASIER TO HANDLE THAN MY OLD ARISAKA ...

YOU'VE GOT A MORE MODERN AND SHORTER GUN THAT FIRES A LARGER ROUND THAN MY LONGER AND OLDER ONE. SEE THE DIFFERENCE?

... BUT IT'S GOT THAT WIERD-ASS .303 ROUND THAT DOESN'T WORK WITH ANYTHING ELSE COME TO THINK OF IT, YOU AND I ARE IN THE SAME BOAT.

(+) THEY DID POSTWAR. IT'S KNOWN AS THE KALISNIKOV AK-47 ASSAULT RIFLE

(*) "SMG" – INITIALS FOR THE TERM SUBMACHINE GUN, A MACHINE GUN THAT FIRES PISTOL ROUNDS.

HERE'S ANOTHER LONE BRIT.

THE BEST WE CAN DO RIGHT NOW IS A SMG.*

I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING. IF ANYONE COULD MAKE A GUN LIKE THE GERMAN STG-44 BUT FIRING RIFLE ROUNDS IT WOULD RULE THE WORLD.+

I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

NOW THERE'S A GUN FOR YOU! THE STEN SMG! TOO BAD WE CAN'T STAY TO ADMIRE, BUT WE GOTTA GO SINCE HE'S GOT THAT!

SHIT! HE'S SEEN US!!

'EY YOU BLOKES! 'ALT RIGHT THERE!!

HE'S BEEN SHOT!
HI THERE. SORRY BUT TIME IS SHORT. YOU TWO ARE IN THE TANK CORPS AS OF RIGHT NOW.

IT'S ONE OF OUR OWN, A TYPE 97, AND IT'S BEING CHASED BY A BRITISH M4!

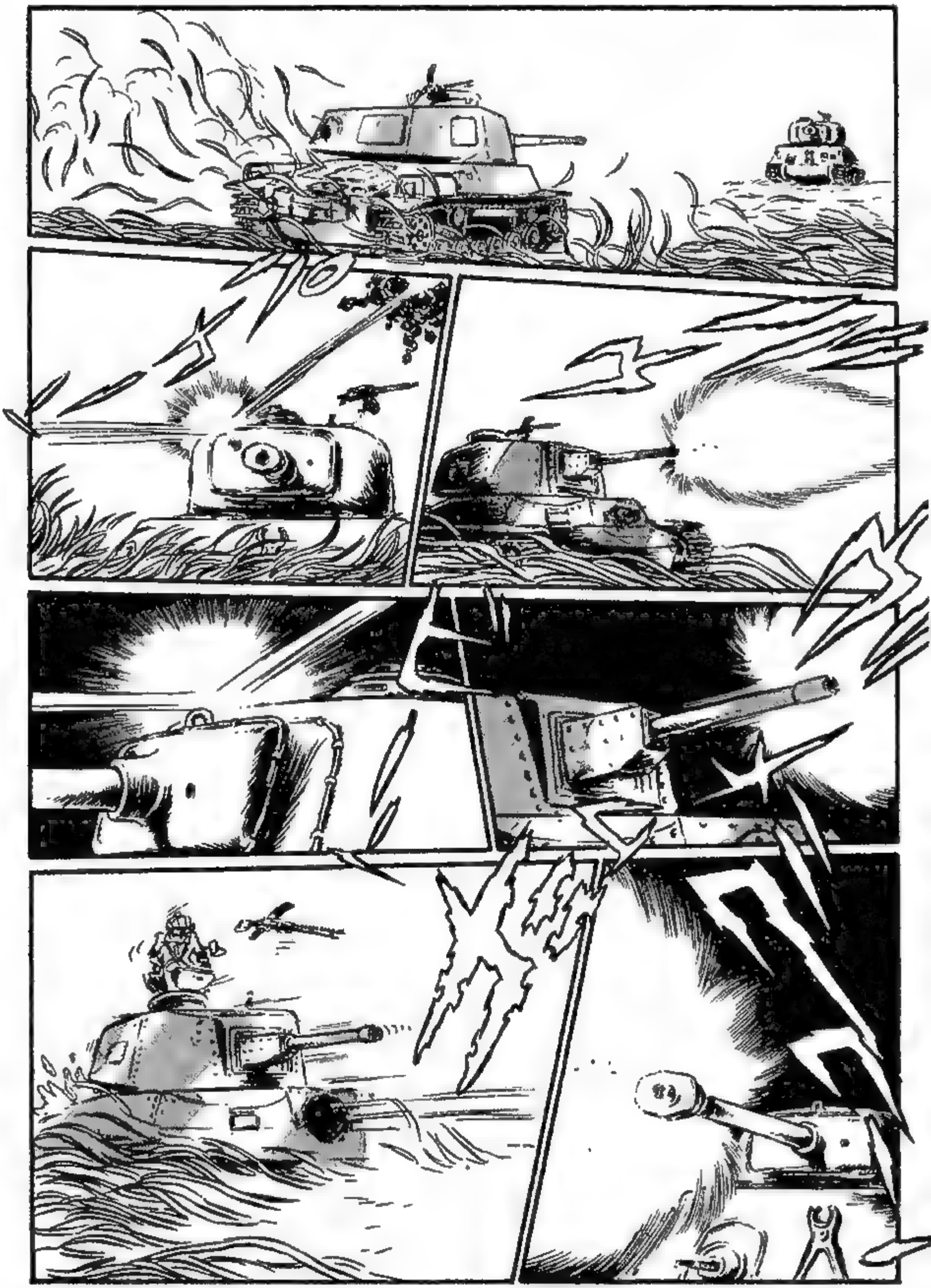
GET DOWN!

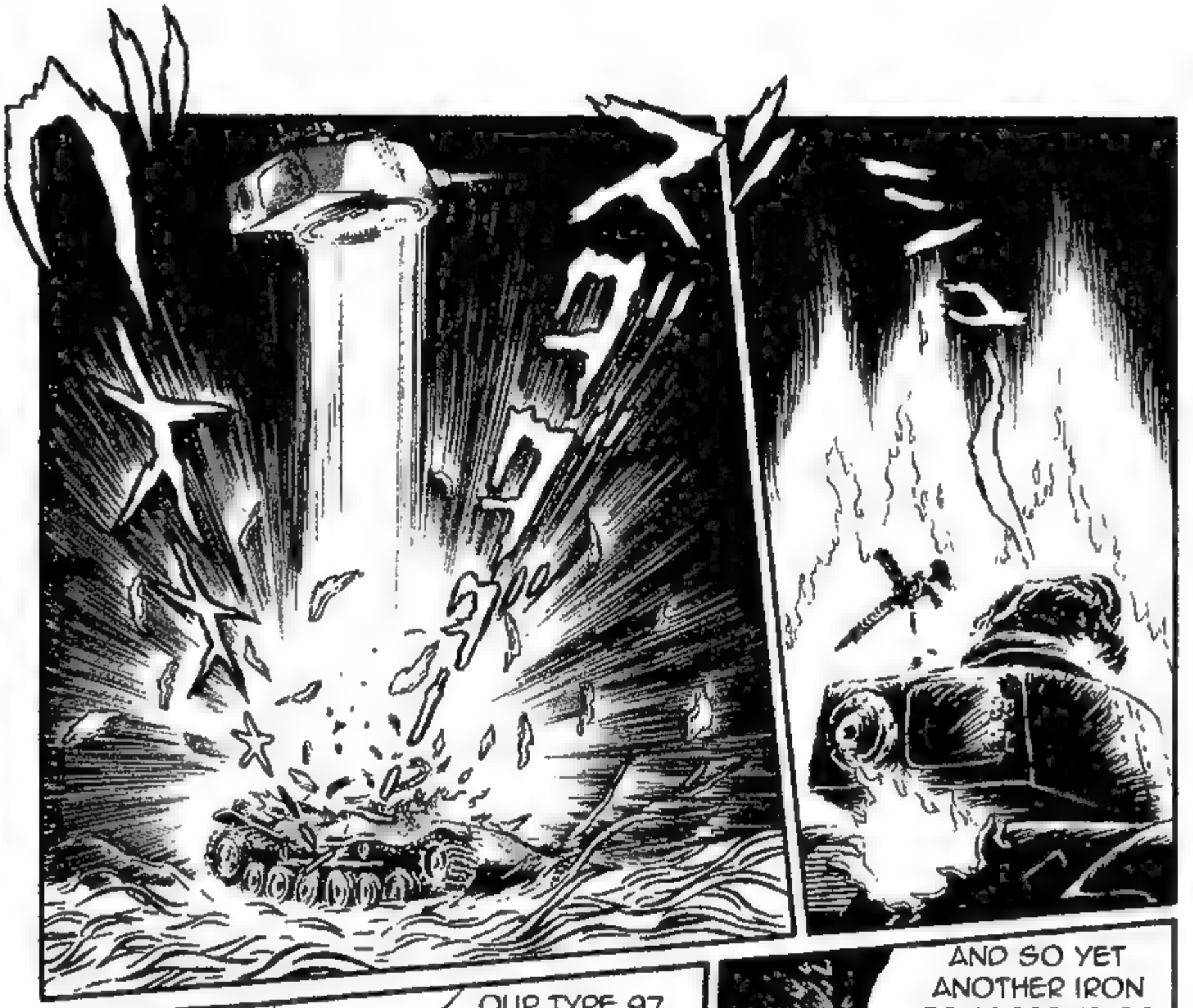
THE ARMOR ON OUR CHI-HAS IS TOO THIN FOR THE STANDARD M4'S 75MM ROUND.

POOR GUY. HE'S GONNA GET BLOWN UP, JUST LIKE THAT OTHER ONE.

NO! HE'S GOING TO TAKE HIM HEAD ON!! YOU FOOL!!!

I'LL GIVE HIM CREDIT FOR MAKING A FIGHTING RETREAT.




GENTLEMEN, THIS IS WHY OUR TANKS ARE CALLED "TOYS."
OUR TYPE 97 HAS THIN ARMOR AND A 47MM GUN. THAT M4 HAD HIM ON EVERYTHING.
AND SO YET ANOTHER IRON TOMBSTONE OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY DECORATES A BATTLEFIELD.
... BUT IT'S GOT NO PROTECTION FOR THE PILOT OR ITS FUEL TANKS!
YEAH. LIKE THE RIESEN*. AS A FIGHTER IT'S SECOND TO NONE ...
I HEAD IT'S BECAUSE WE BUILT EVERYTHING FOR OFFENSE AND DIDN'T THINK ABOUT DEFENSE UNTIL LATER.

(*) "RIESEN" – THE JAPANESE NAME FOR THE MITSUBISHI A6M, ALLIED CODE NAME "ZEKE," ALLIED NICKNAME "ZERO."

OR YOU CAN GO THE OTHER WAY LIKE THE NAVY DID WITH THE *YAMATO* AND THE *MUSASHI*, BOTH SUPER BATTLEWAGONS THAT WOUND UP BEING TOO EXPENSIVE TO RISK.

AND THEN WE HAVE THIS TYPE 100 SMG ... AN ALMOST PERFECT WEAPON ....

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE US TO HAVE A TANK AS GOOD AS THIS GUN?

... OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN!!!

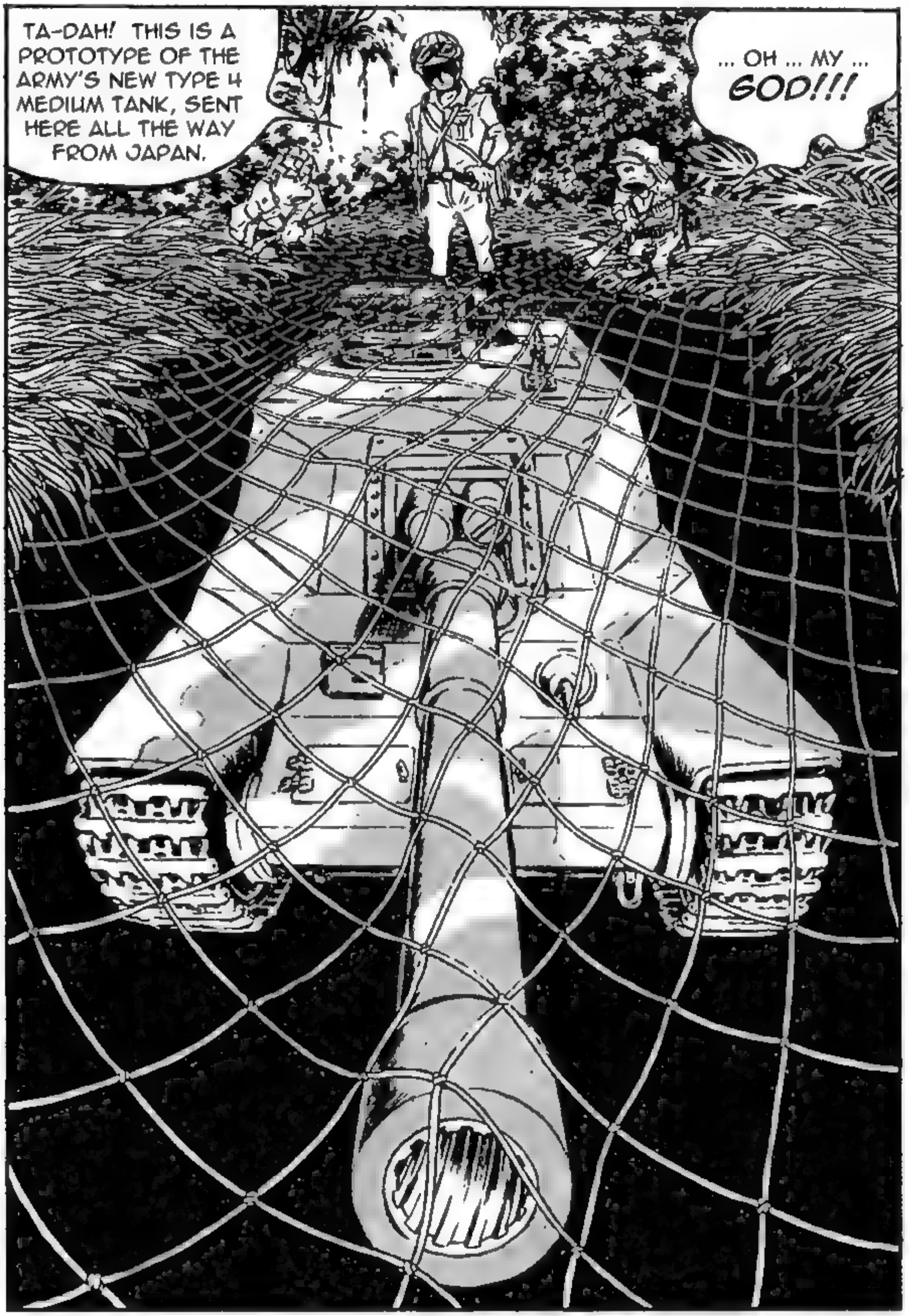
ABSOLUTELY! I'M TIRED OF SEEING OUT LITTLE TIN TANKS GET BLOWN UP ...

IN THAT CASE, GENTLEMEN, FOLLOW ME.

UHH, YEAH. SURE.

TO WHERE YOUR WISH CAN COME TRUE.

WHERE ARE WE GOING, SIR?


TA-DAH! THIS IS A PROTOTYPE OF THE ARMY'S NEW TYPE 4 MEDIUM TANK, SENT HERE ALL THE WAY FROM JAPAN.
... OH ... MY ... GOD!!!

NO SHIT!

THE BRASS SENT IT HERE FOR IN-THE-FIELD TESTING.

THIS ... THIS IS FUCKING IN-CRED-I-BLE!

NOT QUITE, BUT RIGHT IDEA. IT'LL DEFINITELY STOP 75MM SHERMAN M4 SHELLS.

DAMN! THIS IS LIKE BATTLESHIP ARMOR!

HEY! ISN'T THAT A TYPE 90 75MM FIELD GUN?

YOU'VE GOT GOOD EYES, FELLA. IT'S BEEN ADAPTED FOR TANK USE SO AS TO FINALLY PUT US ON AN EVEN FOOTING WITH AMERICAN AND BRITISH TANKS.

WE AREN'T JOKING AROUND WITH THIS.

AND BOTH TOP AND SIDE-MOUNTED TYPE 97 HEAVY MACHINE GUNS TO BOOT. NIIIIIICCE!

GOT NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO!

AND WE'RE THE ONLY TWO YOU COULD FIND IN THIS AREA. I'M GAME.

THAT'S OUR DRIVER UNDER THERE. A GOOD MAN.

YOU'LL BE LOADER AND RADIOMAN. THE YOUNG MAN WILL BE GUNNER.

... THEY GOT WHILE ON THE WAY OVER HERE.

HERE'S WHERE YOU TWO COME IN. I DRAFTED YOU PARTLY BECAUSE THE REST OF MY ORIGINAL CREW DIED FROM CHOLERA ...

I'VE NEVER HAD TO CREW A TANK WITH TWO GREEN ROOKIES EITHER, SO I'D SAY WE'RE EVEN.

BUT I'VE NEVER FIRED ANY KIND OF BIG GUN BEFORE, SIR!

I'M CAPTAIN SHOJI KAMIGATA, IMPERIAL TANK CORPS.

BEFORE WE GET STARTED, LET'S MEET.

FURTHERMORE, I'LL BE TAKING NOTES ON EVERYTHING FOR THE BIG BOYS UP TOP.

GOOD! LET'S GIVE 'EM THE GRAND TOUR, HIRO!

SGT. HIRO HISHE-GAWA, GENTS.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS SAKATA HIDEKI, SIR.

PRIVATE FUTO ADACHI, SIR.

AND DON'T FORGET TO CHECK YOUR LUGGAGE, HAR-HAR!

ADACHI, YOU'VE GOT THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB: SHOOTING THOSE BASTARDS WHENEVER WE SEE 'EM.

A RADIO THAT CAN RECEIVE BUT NOT SEND. SO MUCH FOR BEING A RADIOMAN.

WE CAN RECEIVE BUT NOT SEND.

OH, THAT REMINDS ME. THE RADIO GOT BUSTED WHEN THIS GOT SHIPPED OVER HERE.

AS YOU CAN SEE, ADACHI, THE SHELLS ARE IN EASY REACH. HIDEKI WILL HELP YOU IF THINGS GO CRAZY.

I WONDER IF IT'LL BE BACK?

THAT PROBABLY EXPLAINS THE AIRPLANE.

THAT'S FAST FOR A TANK!

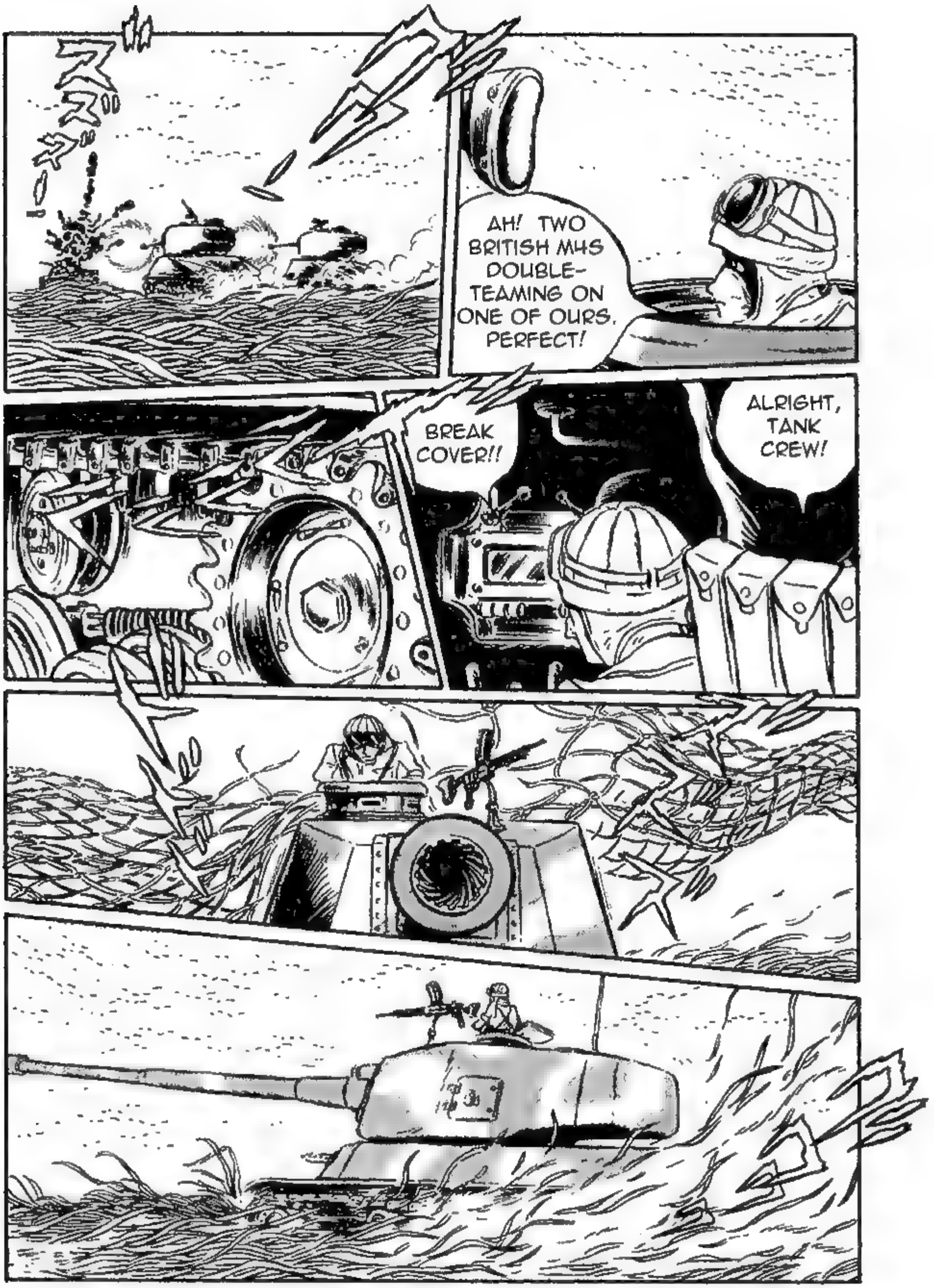
SHE'LL DO 45 KPH IF YOU HAVE THE ROOM TO OPEN HER UP ALL THE WAY.

WE'VE ALSO GOT A BETTER ENGINE THAN A TYPE 97. 400 HORSES, SUPER-CHARGED.

IT CAN DOUBLE AS YOUR COFFIN TOO IF YOU DIE IN HERE.

... SAVE THAT MY HOUSE ISN'T MADE OF IRON AND STEEL AND ARMOR PLATE.

YOU KNOW, THIS ISN'T MUCH BIGGER THAN MY HOUSE BACK HOME ...


AH! TWO BRITISH M4S DOUBLE-TEAMING ON ONE OF OURS. PERFECT!
BREAK COVER!!
ALRIGHT, TANK CREW!

THAT'S THE SIXTH ONE TODAY! IT'D BE BORING IF IT WASN'T SO FUN!

THAT ISN'T A TYPE 97 AND IT'S NOT A TYPE 1 EITHER! IT'S A NEWTYPE!!

WOT TH' 'ELL?!

HEY, UP AND OFF TO THE LEFT! LOOK AT THAT!!

HIRO, BRING US IN CLOSE! LET'S SEE HOW THE ARMOR HOLDS UP!!

I HOPE I'M DOING THIS RIGHT! HERE WE GO!!

ADACHI! SEE IF YOU CAN GET A HIT! MAKE IT AS SOLID AS YOU CAN!

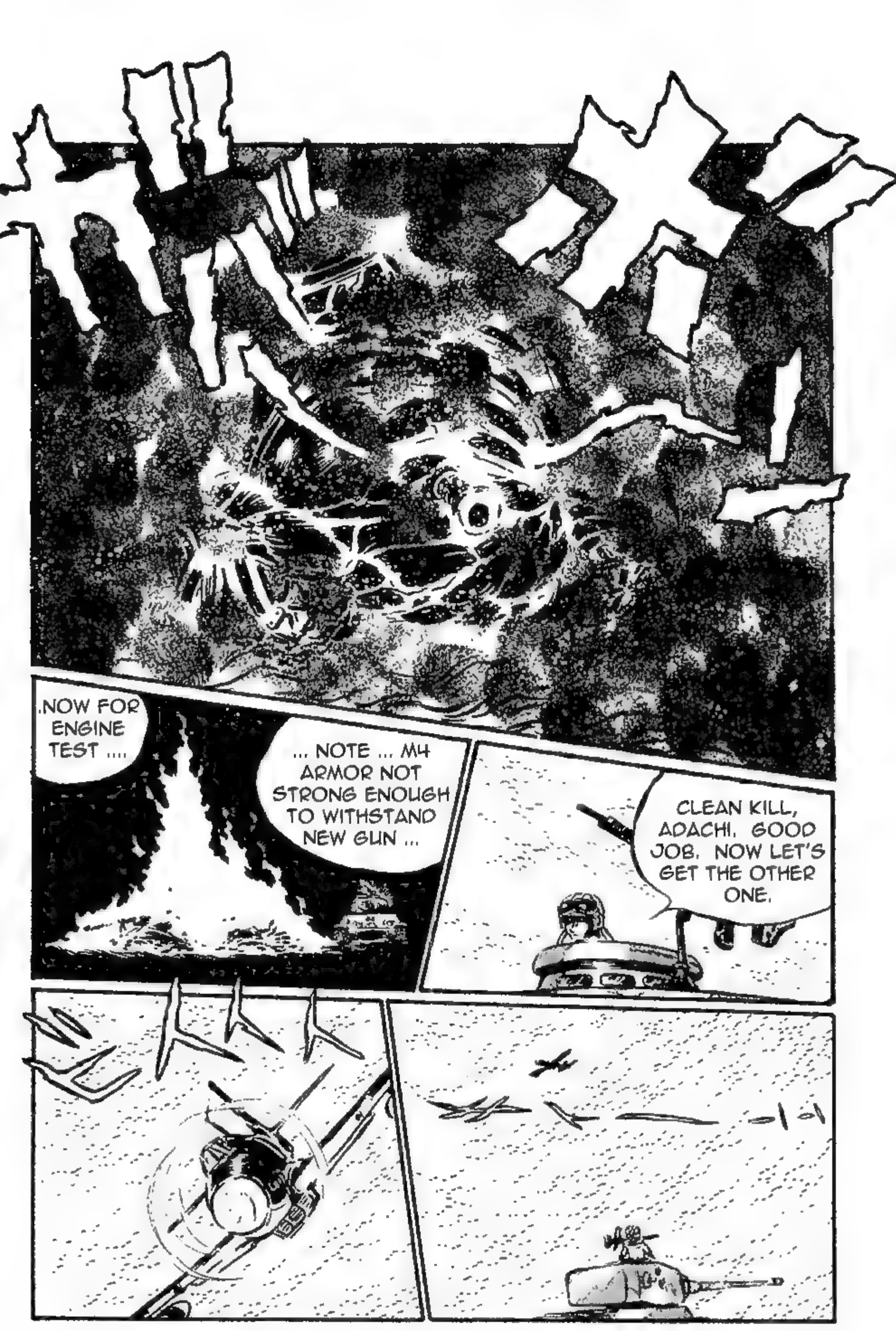
HANG IN THERE, FELLAS AND DON'T WORRY! IT BOUNCED CLEAN OFF!

ADACHI!! MY GRANDMOTHER CAN SHOOT BETTER THAN THAT!!!

BIP!

ONCE MORE ... FIRE!!

THAT'S BETTER! AGAIN!!
DAMN, BUT THAT'S LOUD!


.NOW FOR ENGINE TEST ....
... NOTE ... M4 ARMOR NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND NEW GUN ...
CLEAN KILL, ADACHI. GOOD JOB. NOW LET'S GET THE OTHER ONE.

IF ONLY THOSE DAMN LONGSHOREMEN HADN'T BUSTED THE RADIO WHILE UNLOADING THIS!!!

IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE CAN MANAGE.

... THERE'S ACTION BELOW BUT I CAN'T SEE A THING ...

DAMN FOG!

HIRO ... NEVER MIND, ADACHI ... DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB.

YES SIR. I'M SORRY, SIR. I NEVER HAVE BEEN A VERY GOOD SHOT BUT YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME TIME TO TELL YOU, SIR.

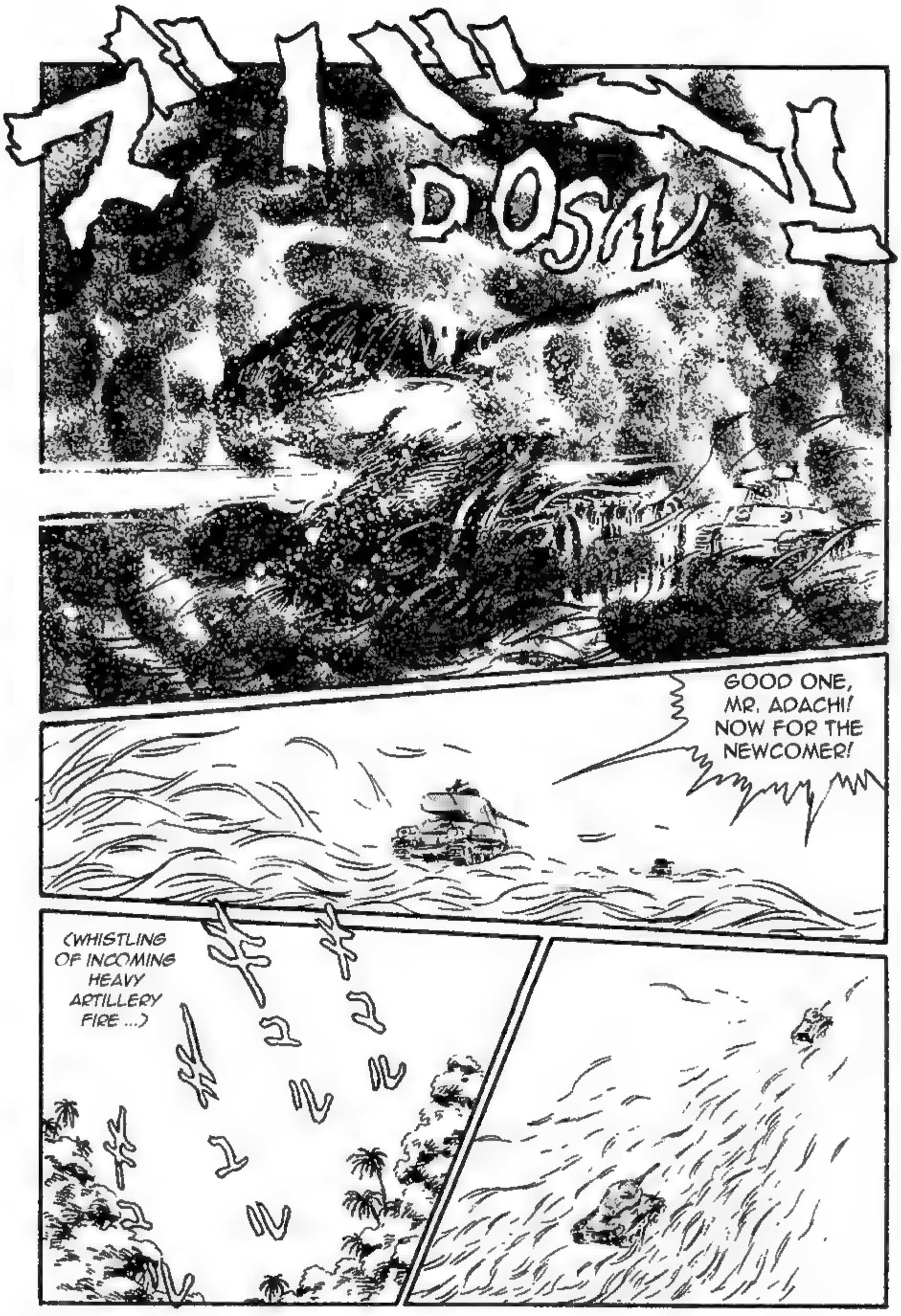
BIT OFF MORE THAN YOU COULD CHEW, EH? DID YOU KNOW WE'RE FASTER THAN YOU TOO?

THANKS .... MAN, LOOK AT HIM RUN!

... NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT A *REAL* OPPONENT?

WHAT'S THE MATTER, TOMMY? NO STOMACH FOR A REAL FIGHT ...

RUN FOR IT! THAT'S SOME KIND OF JAP SUPERTANK CHASING ME!


GOOD ONE, MR. ADACHI! NOW FOR THE NEWCOMER!
(WHISTLING OF INCOMING HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE ...)

FUCK!!! GOOD STOP, HIRO! LITTLE SHIT MUST'VE CALLED IN FIRE SUPPORT! OKAY, LET'S BACKTRACK TO THAT LAST TANK WE TOOK OUT. WE'VE DONE ALL WE CAN HERE.

ALL IN ALL I'D SAY OUR NEW TYPE 4 IS SUPERIOR TO THEIR M4.

... AND ONLY TWO SHELLS WASTED. NOT BAD AT ALL.

LET'S SEE ... TWO ENEMY TANKS DESTROYED, ALL FEATURES TESTED, ONLY MINOR DAMAGE ...

AND YOU HELPED IN THAT, DON'T FORGET.

IF I MAY SAY SO, SIR, THIS IS ONE BAD-ASS TANK.

OUR TEST RESULTS. THIS IS WHAT H.Q. NEEDS FROM US.

WHAT ARE YOU WRITING, SIR?

LET'S SEE NOW ... ONLY MINOR BUCKLING OF TURRET AND BODY ARMOR ...

EVEN IF IT WAS RATHER NOISY WHEN THOSE SHELLS STARTED HITTING.

YEAH, AND BEIN' ABLE TO TAKE OUT THE ENEMY AT WILL WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT BEING BLOWN UP!

GLAD TO DO IT SIR! I'M JUST HAPPY TO HAVE RODE IN A REAL TANK!

HIRO AND I ARE GRATEFUL TO BOTH OF YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

THEN AGAIN, SOME OF THOSE OTHER THINGS WERE WHAT WE NEEDED AT THE TIME.

YOU KNOW, I WISH WE'D HAVE COME UP WITH THIS SOONER INSTEAD OF OTHER THINGS.

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU TWO AND THE TANK?

HERE'S OUR SMGS ALONG WITH ALL OF OUR EXTRA AMMO TO HELP YOU ON YOUR WAY, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO CARRY THOSE LONG RIFLES.

ADACHI, HIDEKI, I'M LETTING YOU GO. I NEED YOU TO TAKE MY NOTEBOOK TO OUR BASE DOWN STREAM

DON'T START UNTIL NIGHTFALL. MAKE SURE THE BASE COMMANDER GETS THAT NOTEBOOK. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.

... IN A BLAZE OF GLORY, AND TAKE AS MANY OF THOSE TOMMIES WITH US AS WE CAN.

... SO THE CAP'N AND I HAVE DECIDED TO GO OUT ...

WE CAN'T GET IT OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED AND WE CAN'T LET THE BRITISH CAPTURE IT ...

I WONDER WHAT HE WROTE ABOUT US.

I WILL?

SIR, I'D LIKE TO STAY WITH YOU. YOU NEED THE HELP AND I'M A GOOD SHOT.

ADACHI WILL DO FINE.

... PRIVATES HIDEKI AND ADACHI WERE VERY HELPFUL AND ARE RECOMMEND FOR PROMO—

Imperial Japanese Army
Type 4 Tank
Field Test Data

I CAN'T HELP IT. I GOTTA KNOW.

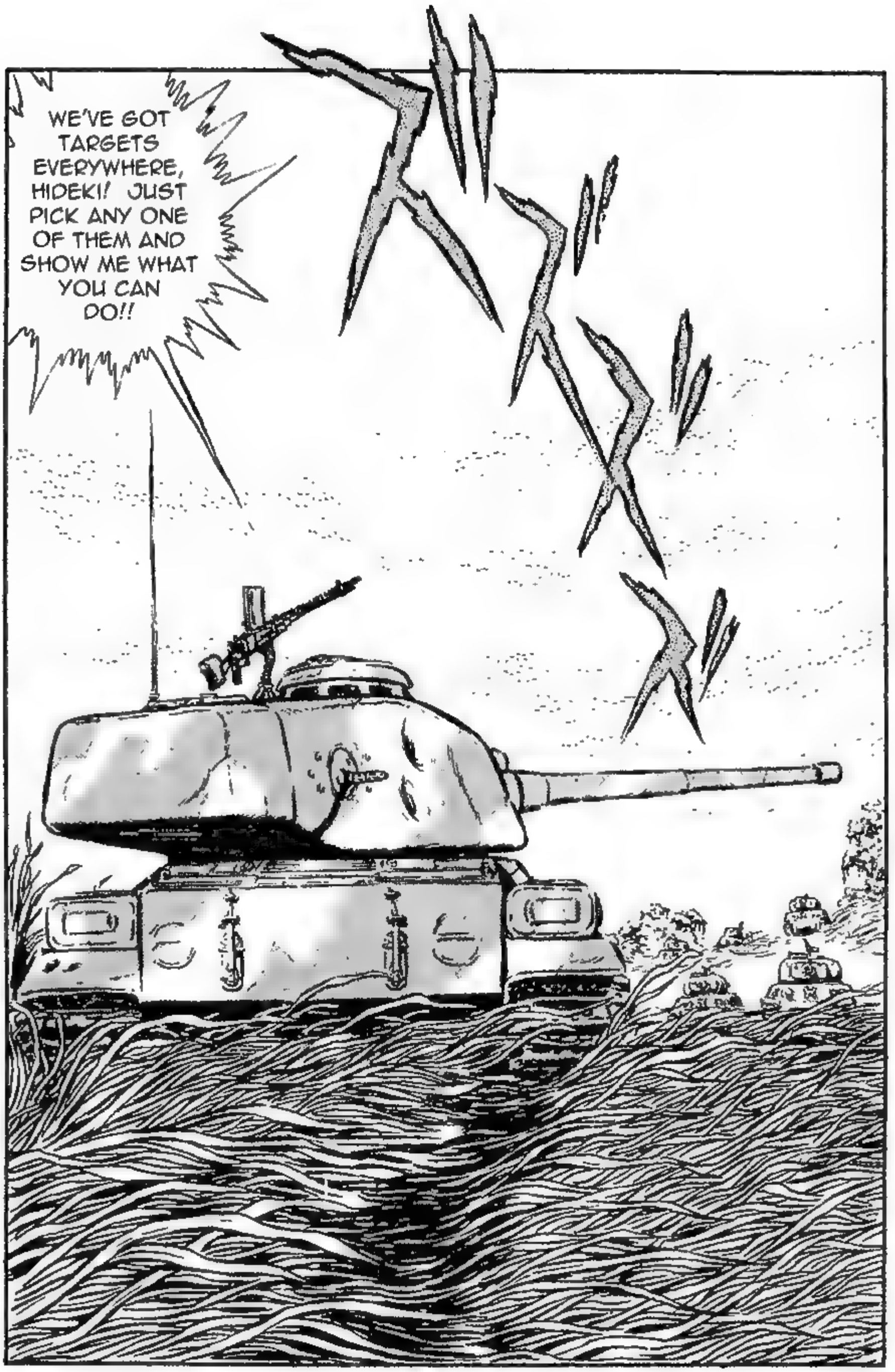
HIDEKI!! WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO TOGETHER!!! HIDEKI!!!!!

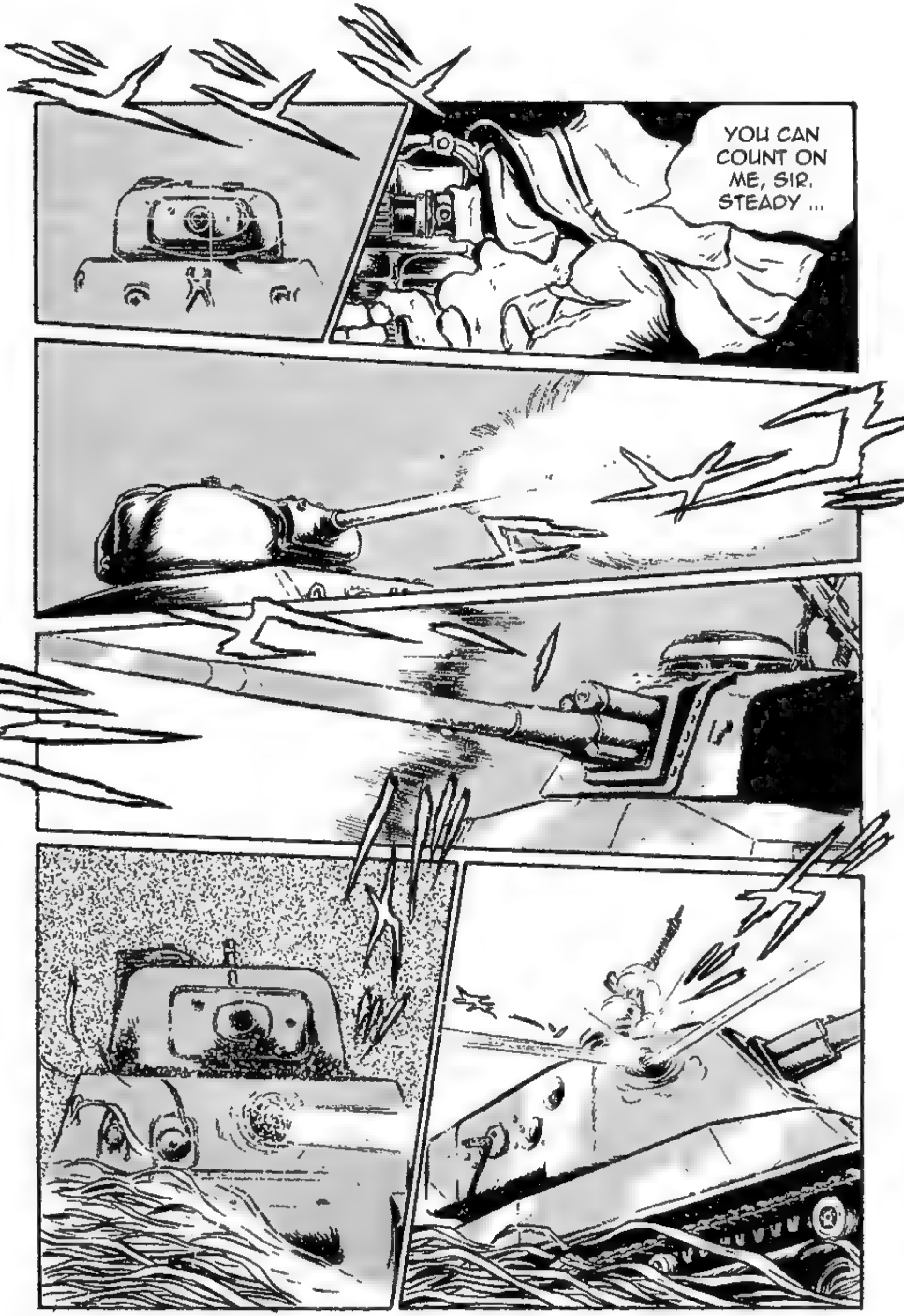
HEY!!!

HOLY FUCKING SHIT!! A WHOLE SWARM OF BRITISH TANKS!! THAT'S WHY THEY LEFT ME BEHIND! GO GET 'EM, GUYS!!!

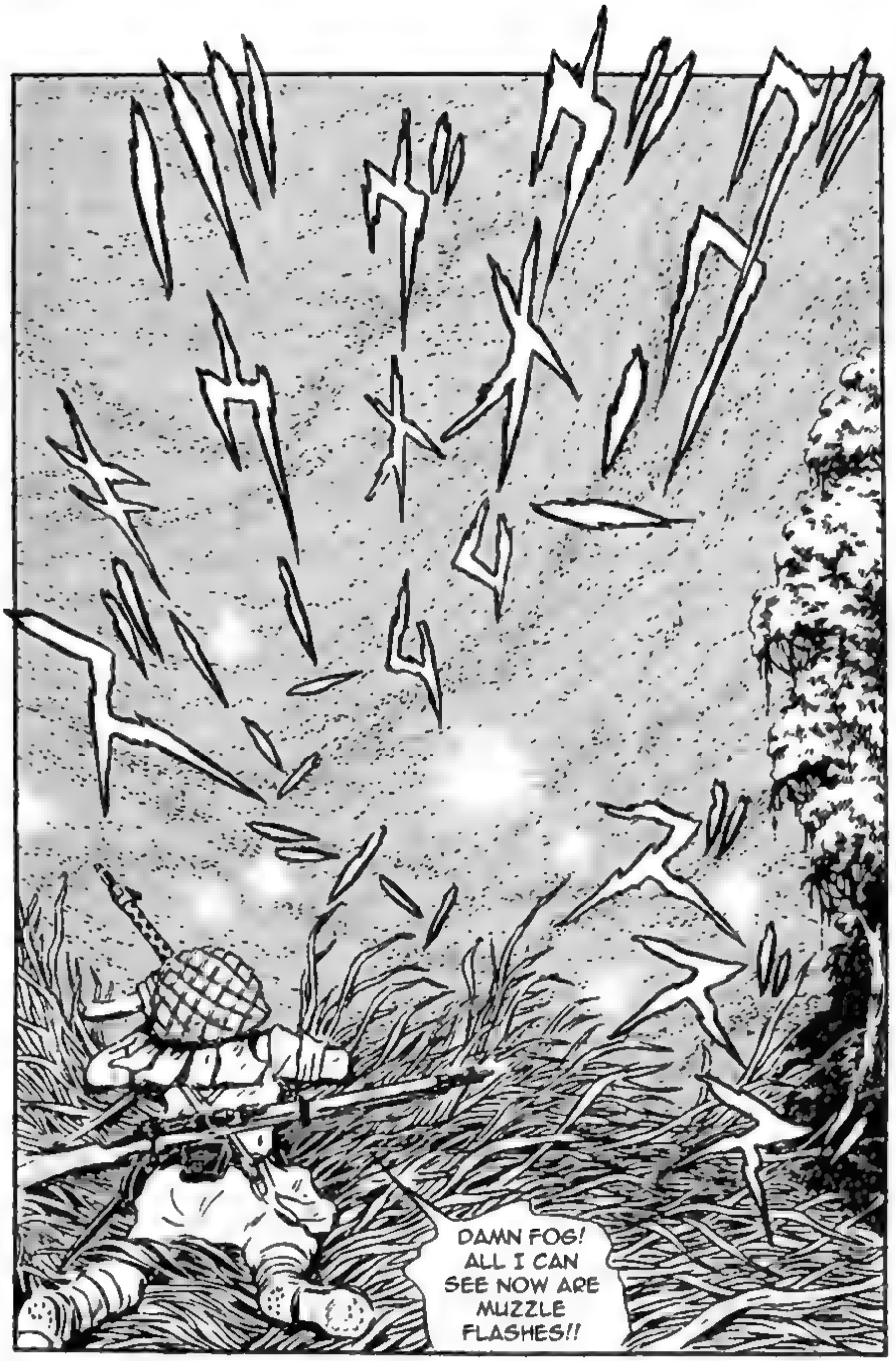
SHOW OFF.

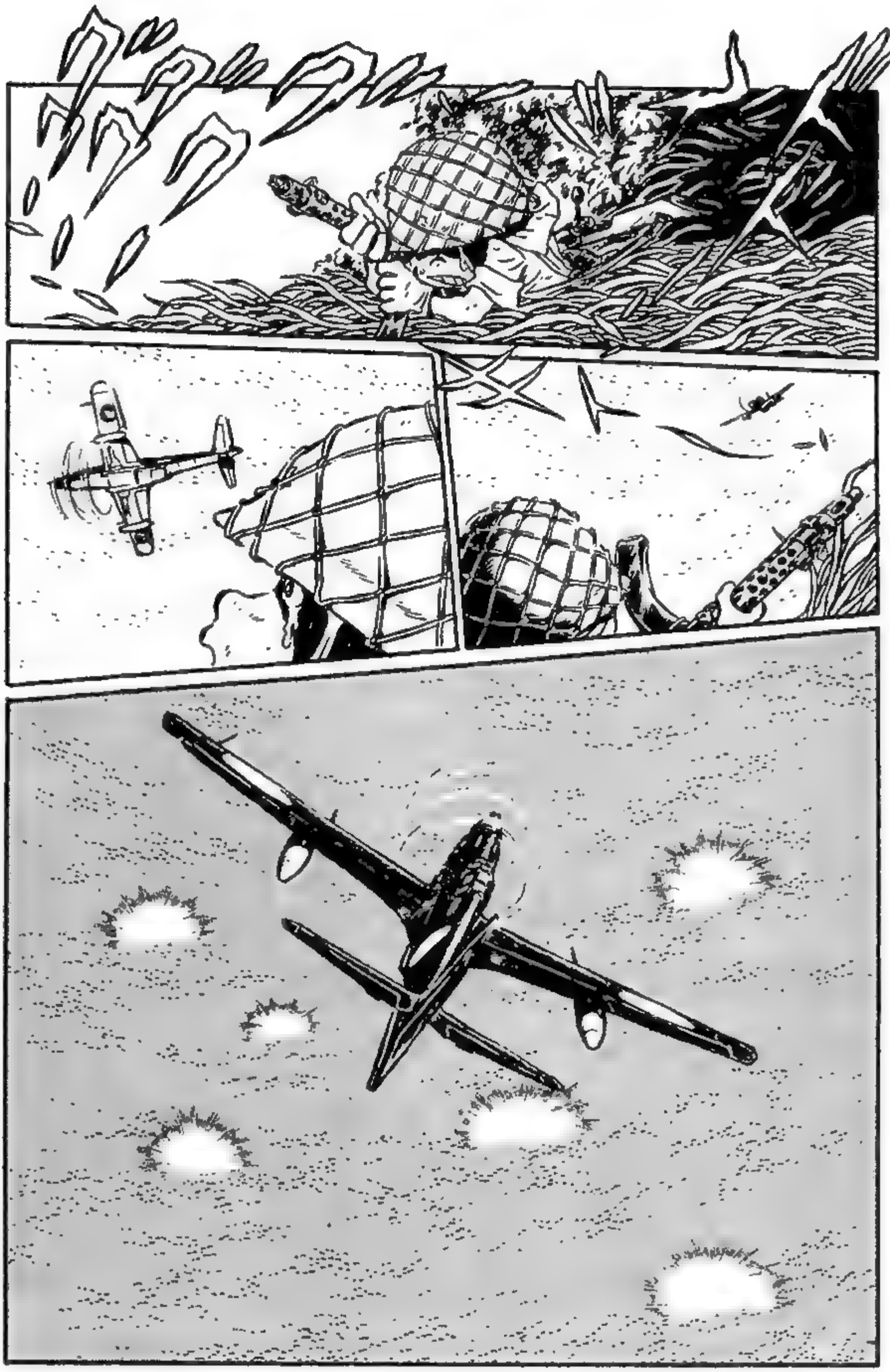
You need to live. Tell them what you've seen.


WE'VE GOT TARGETS EVERYWHERE, HIDEKI! JUST PICK ANY ONE OF THEM AND SHOW ME WHAT YOU CAN DO!!


YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SIR. STEADY ...

HE HIT IT ON THE FIRST TRY! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!!

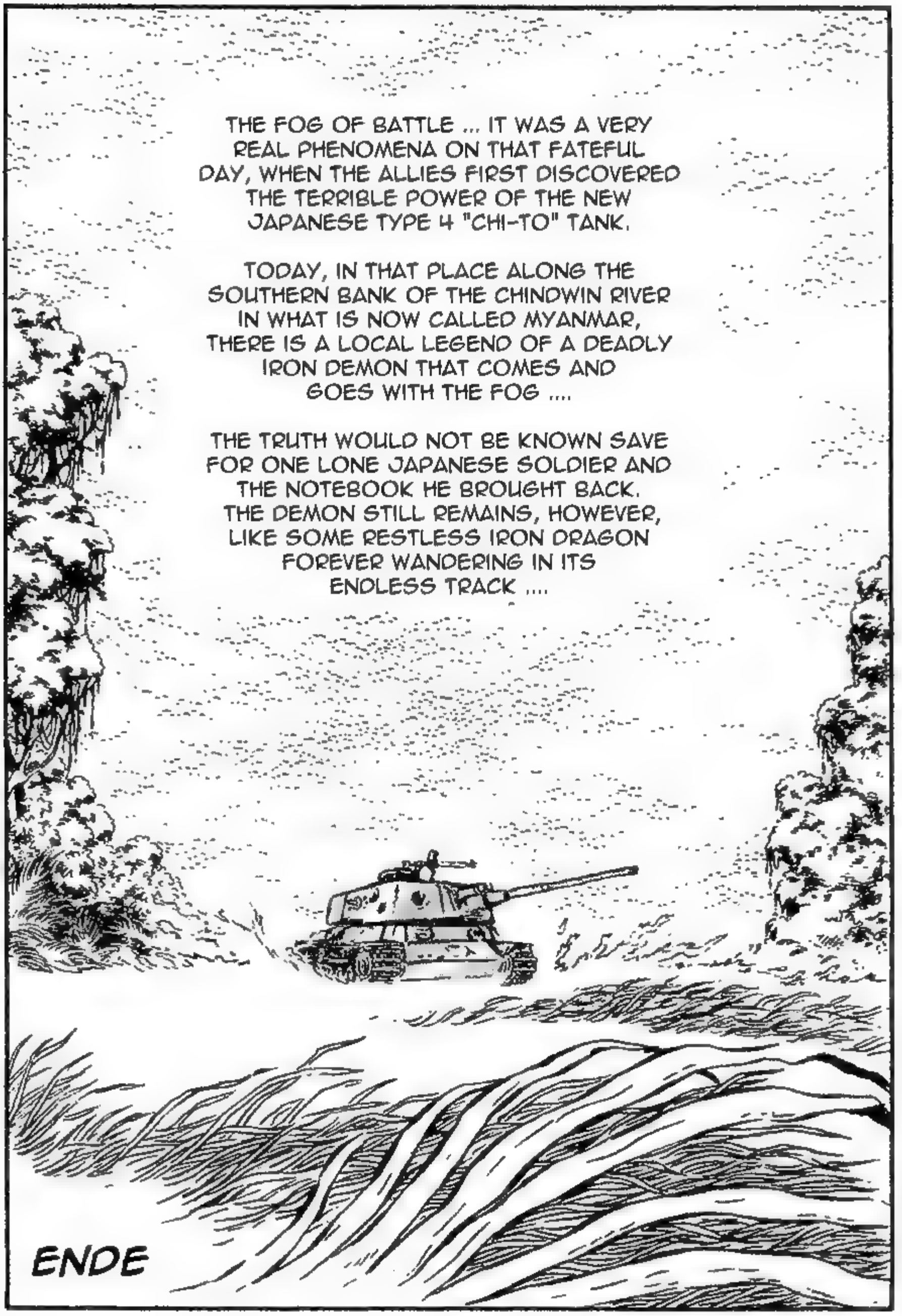

DAMN FOG! ALL I CAN SEE NOW ARE MUZZLE FLASHES!!



RAVEN ONE TO RICE PADDY! THERE IS ONE HELL OF A TANK BATTLE GOING ON BELOW ME, BUT THE FOG'S SO THICK I CAN'T MAKE ANYBODY OUT!

THIS IS RICE PADDY TO RAVEN ONE! RICE PADDY TO RAVEN ONE! HAVE YOU FOUND THEM YET! IS THERE ANY SIGN? CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING FROM UP THERE? ANYTHING AT ALL! OVER!

SIR, I'M CONVINCED THEY'RE DOWN THERE ALONG THE CHINDWIN AND THEY'RE IN THE THICK OF THAT TANK BATTLE, BUT I CAN'T CONFIRM ANYTHING BECAUSE OF THE FOG, OVER!


THE FOG OF BATTLE ... IT WAS A VERY REAL PHENOMENA ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, WHEN THE ALLIES FIRST DISCOVERED THE TERRIBLE POWER OF THE NEW JAPANESE TYPE 4 "CHI-TO" TANK.
TODAY, IN THAT PLACE ALONG THE SOUTHERN BANK OF THE CHINDWIN RIVER IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED MYANMAR, THERE IS A LOCAL LEGEND OF A DEADLY IRON DEMON THAT COMES AND GOES WITH THE FOG ....
THE TRUTH WOULD NOT BE KNOWN SAVE FOR ONE LONE JAPANESE SOLDIER AND THE NOTEBOOK HE BROUGHT BACK. THE DEMON STILL REMAINS, HOWEVER, LIKE SOME RESTLESS IRON DRAGON FOREVER WANDERING IN ITS ENDLESS TRACK ....
ENDE

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 22, 1973>

MANDELISMS

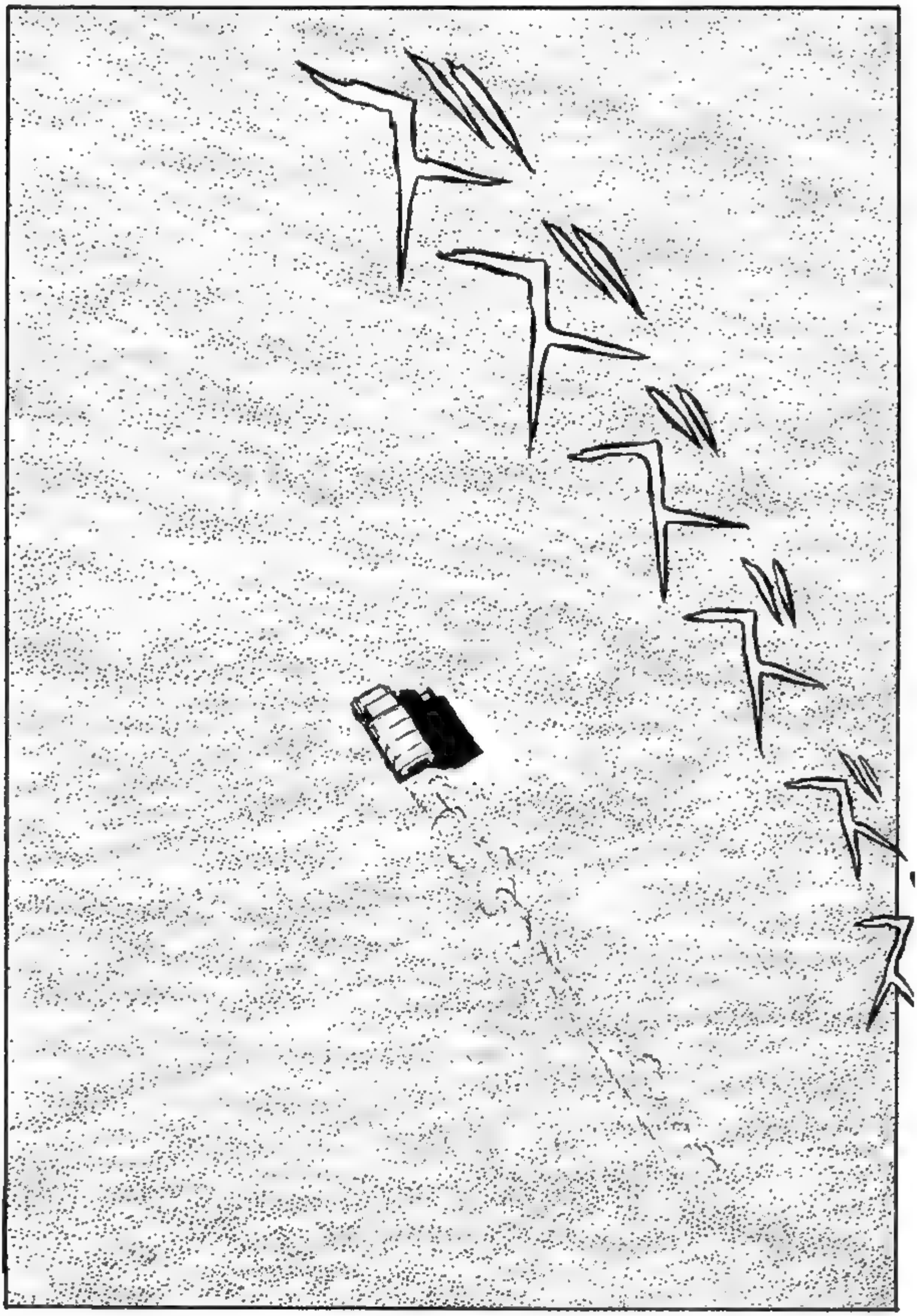
This is the first of several stories in *The Cockpit* in which Matsumoto indulges in the time-honored practice of military professionals, academics, historians both credentialed and armchair, and flat out miltary fans, and that is playing "what if?" In this case, Matsumoto asks, "What if the most advanced main battle tank that the Japanese ever came up with during the war, the Type 4 "Chi-To" (yes, that was it's name), actually got into the field instead of coming too late in the war and never making it out of Japan?" True to form he also gives the reader a basic education on the Type 4, one you can verify for yourself from any number of sources As always and given how I had to do it this initial English adaptation of mine is far from perfect That said I hope it's halfway decent and that you enjoy it

The mention of the Chindwin River late in the story makes this the second story in *The Cockpit* to be set in Burma, or Myanmar as it's now called. The World War II armchair historian in me wants to draw you attention to the name Chindwin and its connection with the so called "chindits" of wartime history, but as they have nothing to do with this story I'll let you look up that piece of wartime history on your own.

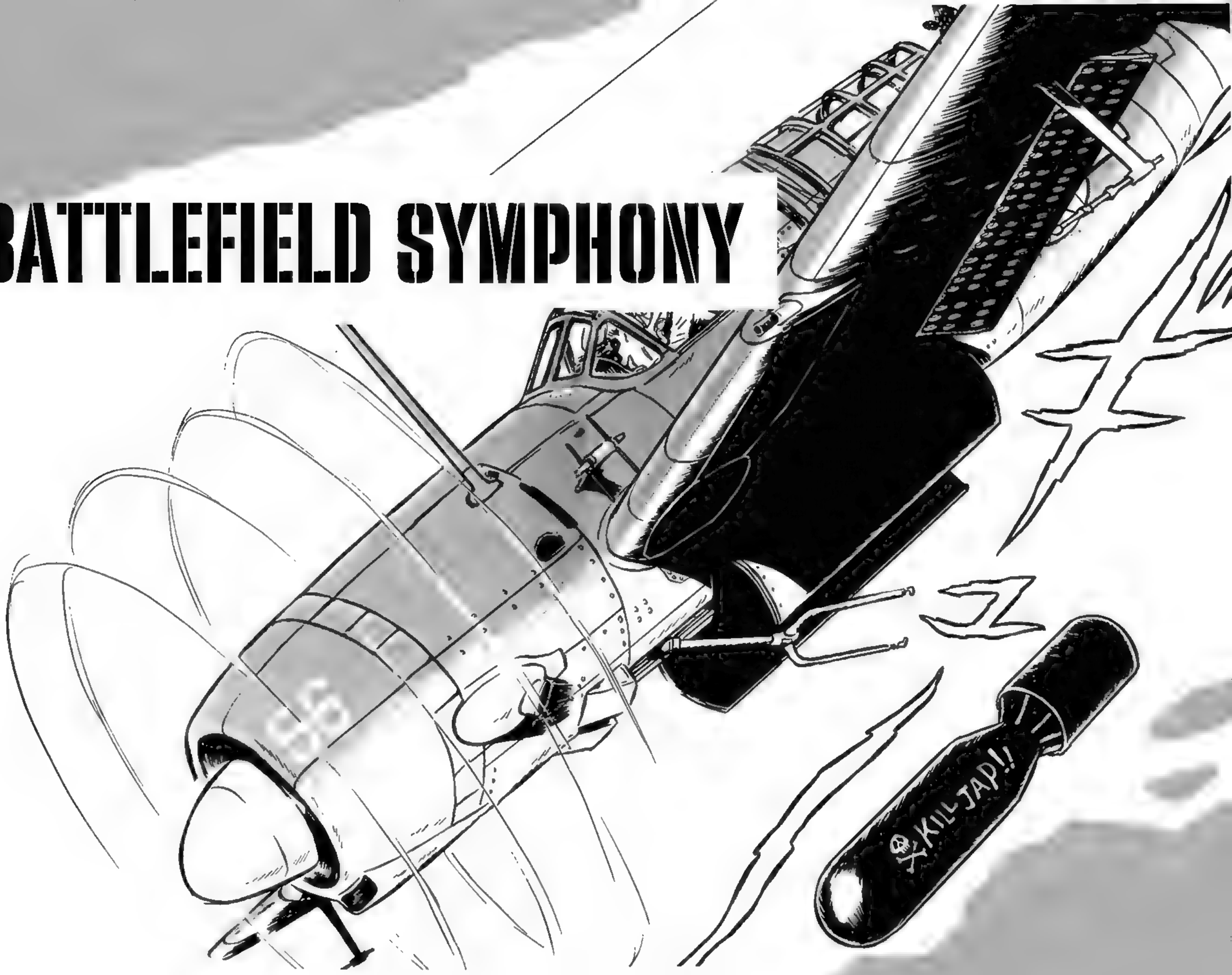
I have to admit to inventing the radio call signs used by the Japanese spotter plane and the Japanese army outpost downstream on the Chindwin River from where the action takes place in the story. I needed something and I'm not familiar with actual Japanese military radio call signs used during the war. Those of you who do a better version of this in the future and want to keep this intrusion of mine might want to look those up for greater realism.

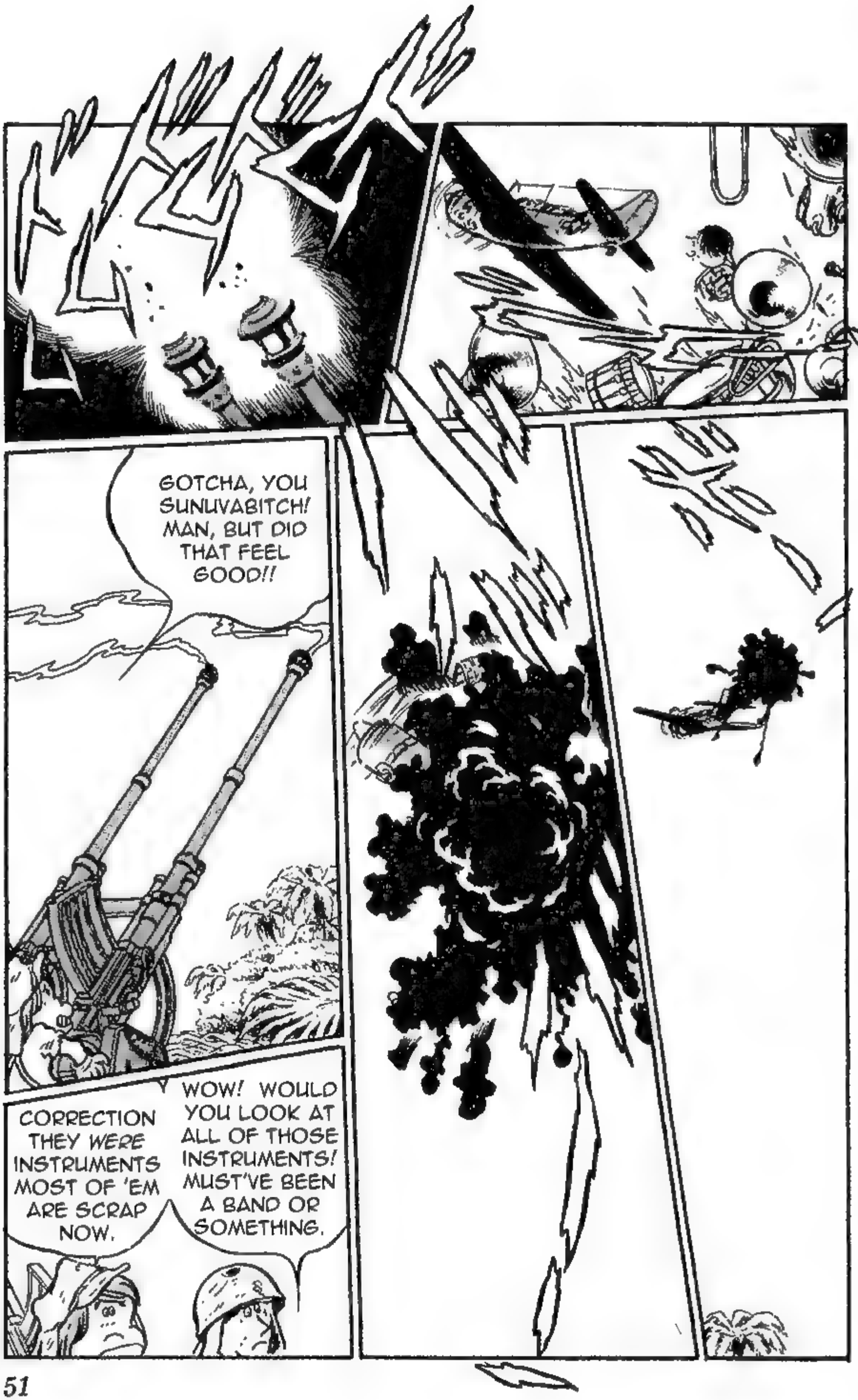
TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

BATTLEFIELD SYMPHONY



BATTLEFIELD SYMPHONY




GOTCHA, YOU SUNUVABITCH! MAN, BUT DID THAT FEEL GOOD!!
CORRECTION THEY WERE INSTRUMENTS MOST OF 'EM ARE SCRAP NOW.
WOW! WOULD YOU LOOK AT ALL OF THOSE INSTRUMENTS! MUST'VE BEEN A BAND OR SOMETHING.

'CUZ I'M CURIOUS, OKAY?

HEY, THE DRIVER'S DEAD. WHY BOTHER?

YEAH. I KNOW.

THIS IS SAD, YOU KNOW? GOOD MUSIC ALWAYS HELPS THINGS.

... PLEASE GET IT ALL ... BEFORE IT BLOWS AWAY ...

... PLEASE ...

NEVER HEARD OF THIS GUY.

HAND-WRITTEN SHEET MUSIC!

WHAT'S THIS?

WHO ARE YOU, AND HOW'D YOU END UP OUT HERE?

I'LL GET IT! I'LL GET IT!

... THAT'S ... MY MASTERPIECE ... MY BATTLEFIELD SYMPHONY ... BEEN WORKING ON IT ... ALL MY LIFE ...

RYOUSKE ... SUNATSUGAWA. I WAS A COMPOSER BEFORE THE WAR ...

... THEN I WAS DRAFTED. THEY MADE ME ... A BANDLEADER ... PLAYED ALL OVER ... BUT KEPT WORKING ... WORKING ON MY ... MY SYMPHONY ....

YOU FOUND IT ALL! EVERY PAGE! OH, THANK YOU! I AND ALL OF MY ANCESTORS THANK YOU!

WE ... WE WERE FINALLY HEADING BACK HOME ... WHEN THAT PLANE CAME .... BLEW UP THE OTHER TRUCK WITH MY MUSICIANS ... THEN IT CAME AFTER ME ... AND MY SYMPHONY ... MY SYMPHONY ...

A SNIPER! GET DOWN!!

NRK!!!

NOW WHERE ARE YOU-- OH! THERE YOU ARE! NOT VERY SMART, PICKING THE MOST OBVIOUS PIECE OF COVER AROUND!!

ALL RIGHT, YOU YANKEE ASSHOLE! YOU ARE SO MINE!!

DAMMIT! GETTING SHOT FOR A SCRAP OF PAPER!! WHY?!!

OH YEAH?!

SMOKE! HE'S SHOOTING AGAIN!!

MY INSTRUMENT, IF YOU WILL. MY TYPE 98 DUAL AA GUN. GREAT FOR JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.

THAT WAS AMAZING. YOU'RE VERY GOOD WITH THAT.

I THINK I'LL USE THESE INSTRUMENTS TO MAKE A MEMORIAL TO MY FORMER BANDMATES.

I'M ALL OUT.

THAT IS, IF I HAD MORE SHELLS.

SORRY GUYS. I'M ON MY OWN NOW.

A GUN? BUT I--

UHH, YEAH. A WAR. RIGHT.

TAKE IT. THERE'S A WAR ON, YOU KNOW.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

WHADDYA MEAN, "WHAT THE HELL?" I'M MAKING A POT FOR COOKING RICE! THIS IS ALL--

WHAT THE HELL?!

LISTEN, FELLA. MOST OF THEM ARE ONLY GOOD FOR SCRAP NOW. WHY ARE YOU GETTING SO MAD OVER A PILE OF SCRAP?!

THESE ARE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS! THEY ARE NOT FOR COOKING RICE! THEY ARE FOR MAKING MUSIC!! THEY ARE ... ... THEY ...

WHY'D YOU DO THAT?!

IT SURE DOESN'T NEED AN ASSHOLE LIKE YOU!!

YEAH, AND THE ARMY NEEDS COMPOSERS LIKE IT IT NEEDS TWO ASSHOLES!!

I AM RYOUSKE SUNATSUGAWA, A MUSICAL COMPOSER FIRST AND FOREMOST! I AM NOT A SOLDER, I'M A FUCKING DRAFTEE!

SO FORGET ABOUT THEM! YOU'RE A SOLDIER NOW, JUST LIKE ME, SO START ACTING LIKE ONE!

WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TWO DOING?! HUH?!?! WE'RE FIGHTING THE AMERICANS, NOT EACH--

I GOT AN IDEA. COVER ME!

WHAT'LL WE DO NOW?

YEAH ... OH, I GET IT!

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PLAY THIS, MISTER?

COVER YOU? BUT I'M NO SOLDIER!

IT'S WORTH A TRY, SINCE I CAN'T USE THIS.

YEAH! HAVE YOU HEARD THE STORY ABOUT THE SOLDIER WHOSE BUGLE PLAYING STOPPED THE FIGHTING?*

(*) FROM THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR. FYI THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR IS OFTEN CALLED ONE OF THE MOST MUSICAL WARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY DUE TO ALL OF THE MUSIC THAT WAS CONNECTED TO IT AND PLAYED BY BOTH SIDES DURING IT.

IT'S NOT A SONG, IT'S A SYMPHONY. NEEDS A FULL ORCHESTRA.

HEY, TRY PLAYING THAT NEW SONG OF YOURS FOR ALL OF US.

Symphony
Beethoven

THANKS. HOPE THIS WORKS. BY THE WAY, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

LORD, I HOPE THIS WORKS.

HOLD THE MUSIC FOR ME?

WE AIN'T GOT ONE AND WE AIN'T GOT TIME! NOW PLEASE PLAY!!

YOU'VE GOT IT UPSIDE DOWN, MR. MORYAMA.

WHAT'S WRONG?

OH! SORRY.

SUSUMU MORYAMA. GOD, I HOPE THIS WORKS TOO. SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER.

YOU KNOW, YOU HEAR A LOT OF STORIES ABOUT WEIRD THINGS HAPPENING IN WAR, BUT IT'S ANOTHER THING TO SEE IT HAPPEN WITH YOUR OWN EYES, AS DID I.

I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY ... NOR WILL I EVER FORGET HIS "BATTLEFIELD SYMPHONY.

SUMATSUGAWA ACTUALLY STOPPED THE FIGHTING FOR A TIME WITH HIS TRUMPET AND PLAYING HIS OWN MUSIC.

IT WAS THE KIND OF SONG THAT FILLS YOU WITH PRIDE, AND MAKES THE HAIRS STAND UP ON YOUR CHEST, YOU KNOW? THAT KIND OF SONG.

BUT IT WASN'T TWO SECONDS AFTER HE FINISHED THAT THE AMERICANS STARTED FIRING AGAIN.

THIS MEANS MORE.

WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YOU DOING?! LIKE I SAID BEFORE, THIS IS A WAR AND IF YOU DON'T HAVE A GUN AND USE IT YOU'RE A DEAD MAN!

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FROM PEOPLE WHO LISTEN TO JAZZ, AND -- HEY! WHY'D YOU TOSS YOUR RIFLE?!

IT MIGHT EVEN BE MY EPITATH, AS YOU SAID. ANYWAY IT'S DONE ...

MAYBE ... BUT MAYBE I'M A NERD WHO'S WROTE THE BEST SONG EVER.

ALL I SEE IS A NERD IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR JUST BEGGING TO BE SHOT.

IT MEANS MORE THAN MY LIFE ... NO, IT IS MY LIFE. CAN'T YOU SEE?!

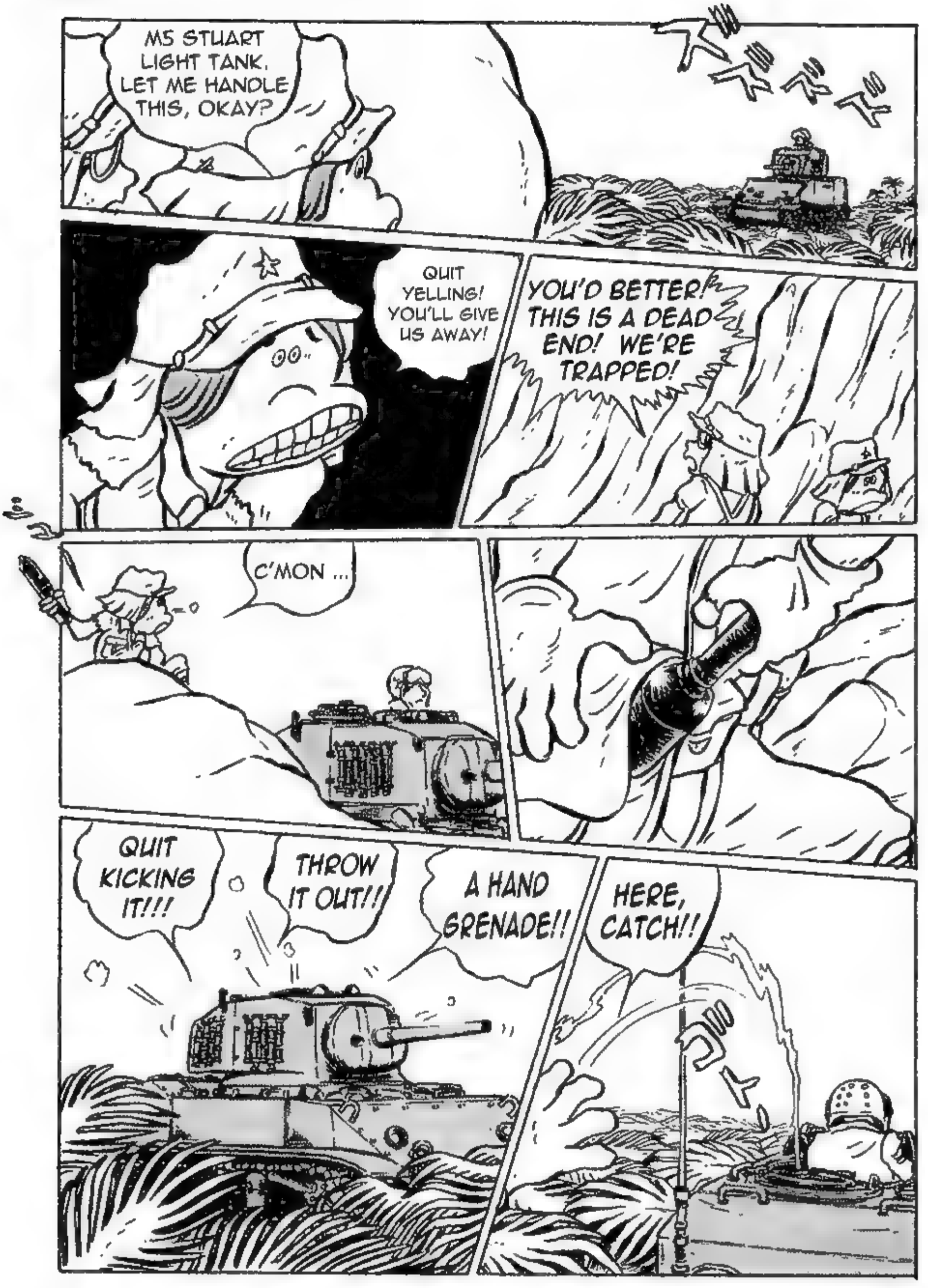
... I CAN STAND ON A PODIUM BEFORE A REAL ORCHESTRA AND PRESENT IT RIGHT.

... COME HELL OR HIGH WATER. THEN, MAYBE, SOMEDAY, AFTER THIS WAR IS OVER ...

... AND IT'S COMING BACK TO JAPAN WITH ME ...

WHAT YOU'RE HEARING IS THE SOUND OF AN APPROACHING TANK.

CAN'T YOU HEAR IT? THE LOW MURMUR OF THE CROWD GIVING WAY TO THE ROLL OF THE DRUMS AS IT BEGINS?


M5 STUART LIGHT TANK. LET ME HANDLE THIS, OKAY?
QUIT YELLING! YOU'LL GIVE US AWAY!
YOU'D BETTER! THIS IS A DEAD END! WE'RE TRAPPED!
C'MON ...
QUIT KICKING IT!!!
THROW IT OUT!!
A HAND GRENADE!!
HERE, CATCH!!

UM
OO
YOU NEED TO BE HOLDING YOUR RIFLE, NOT THAT SHEET MUSIC! AAAARRGH!!!
GODDAMN IT, SUNATSUGAWA! I COULD HAVE USED YOUR HELP WITH THAT TANK, YOU KNOW!
AS I SAID, THIS MEANS MORE TO ME THAN MY LIFE.
MAKING SURE IT'S ALL STILL HERE.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, MISTER?!

EVEN IF I DIE THEN I'LL LIVE MY DREAM IN THE AFTERLIFE.

!

WELL YOU'D BETTER CHANGE YOUR MIND OR YOU'LL END UP LOOKING LIKE THAT.

YOU ARE ONE CRAZY MOTHER FUCKER. YOU KNOW THAT?

I'LL WALK ALL THE WAY BACK IF I HAVE TO, AND I'M TAKING THIS WITH ME.

BUT RIGHT NOW I'M GOING BACK TO JAPAN ANY WAY I CAN MANAGE, AND YOU KNOW WHAT?

GET DOWN!

CATCH!

BACK AT YA!

ガシッ

SUNATSUGAWA? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I'M GLAD I STOCKED UP WHEN THEY WERE GIVING THESE OUT A FEW DAYS BACK!

HEY ...

A LITTLE PRESENT FROM ARMY R&D BACK HOME! OUR NEW HAND GRENADE!

HEY! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

MUST'VE BEEN THAT GRENADE. SORRY.

I'M DEAF! NO SOUND, NOT EVEN RINGING IN MY EARS! NOTHING!! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!!!

I ... I CAN'T HEAR. I CAN'T HEAR A THING!

... THEN I WON'T KNOW WHAT'S BAD AND NEEDS FIXING, OR WHAT CAN BE MADE BETTER!!

IF I CAN'T HEAR MY OWN MUSIC ...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS FOR A MUSICIAN TO BE DEAF?!?! NOW I CAN'T HEAR MY OWN MUSIC!!!!

I CAN'T HEAR A THING!! I'M AS DEAF AS A POST!!

DAMN THIS FUCKING, STINKING, UNCARING, STUPID WAR THAT WOUDL TAKE AWAY A MUSICIAN'S HEARING!!!

I'VE GOT TO HEAR!!!! UNDERSTAND? I'VE GOT TO HEAR!!!

WHAT A BABY.

(SOUND OF A GROWN MAN SOBBING)

NOTE TO READER - HE THINKS HE'S ABOUT TO COMMIT SEPPUKU, AKA "HARI-KARI"

WHA--?! NO, DON'T DO THAT!
I DON'T CARE HOW BAD, JUST PLAY.
PLAY.
I CAN FEEL THE VIBRATION ...
... BUT I CAN'T HEAR THE SOUND. THAT'S IT THEN. IT'S GONE.
KLANNGGGG!!!

UHH, YEAH! RIGHT!!

I COULD BE THE NEXT BEETHOVEN! I COULD BE THE NEXT GREAT DEAF MUSICIAN!

... AND YET HE WENT ON TO WRITE SOME OF THE GREATEST MUSIC THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN!

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE. BEETHOVEN WAS DEAF. YEAH! HE WAS JUST AS DEAF ...

I SEE RIGHT NOW I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO READ LIPS.

PROVIDED WE GET BACK TO JAPAN, THAT IS.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE AS GOOD AS BEETHOVEN, BUT IF WHAT I HEARD EARLIER IS ANY INDICATION I THINK YOU COULD PULL IT OFF, SUNATSUGAWA!

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH THIS NUT JOB?

YES ... IF BEETHOVEN COULD DO IT ....

I CAN'T HEAR, REMEMBER!

WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE SAYING?!

HEY! THE AMERICANS HAVE AN AIRBASE NOT FAR FROM HERE DOWN BY THE RIVER! AND I KNOW HOW TO FLY A PLANE! IT'S BEEN A WHILE, BUT I BET IF I COULD--

IT'S A GOOD DREAM TOO. IT'S NOT HIS FAULT HE GOT DEAF. I'M CRAZY, BUT I'M GONNA HELP HIM.

... BUT HE'S GOT THAT DREAM OF HIS.

THIS IS CRAZY ...

The Americans have an airbase on the river just a few miles from here.

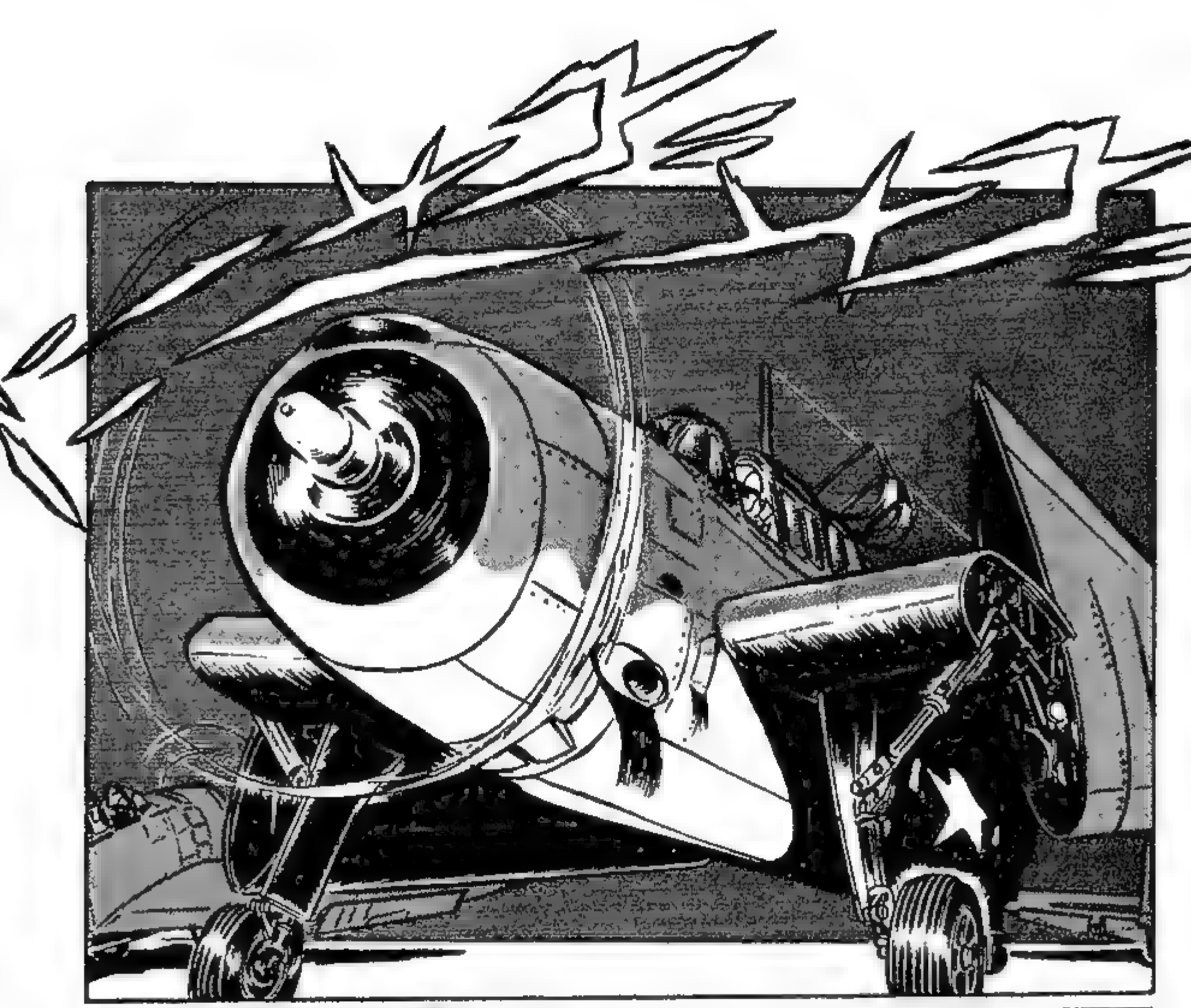
WHAT ARE YOU ...?

We're going to steal a plane and I can fly you out of here so you can go back to Japan.

THEY DO?

Do you have a better idea? I'm listening.

ARE YOU CRAZY? AND CAN YOU EVEN FLY?!


THIS IS CRAZY.
IT'S ALL FUELED UP AND READY TO GO. IT'LL BE PERFECT! NOW FOR THE PILOT AND THE GUARDS.
THAT ONE.
LET. ME. HAVE. THIS. BE. REA-DY. TO. GO. WHEN. I WAVE. AT. YOU.

... AND THIS IS AN AMERICAN PLANE TO BOOT, WITH ALL ENGLISH EVERYTHING!

I KNOW I'M CRAZY. I HAVEN'T FLOWN A PLANE SINCE BEFORE THE WAR ...

WHEN. I. WAVE. YOU. COME. GET. IN. AND. WE. FLY. OFF.

I. AM. STEALING. THAT. PLANE.

DON'T YOU RUN OFF AND LEAVE ME!!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

THAT I MAKE IT BACK TO JAPAN, IN ONE PIECE, AND *WITH MY MUSIC!*

YOU DIDN'T KNOW I HAD THIS, DID YOU? CAME FROM MY DRIVER. MY INSURANCE POLICY ...

WHERE AND WHEN DID YOU GET THAT PISTOL?

I KNOW WHAT YOUR PLAN IS! TO ESCAPE IN THAT PLANE AND LEAVE ME BEHIND TO BE TAKEN PRISONER! WELL IF I CAN'T GO ANYWHERE THEN NEITHER WILL YOU!

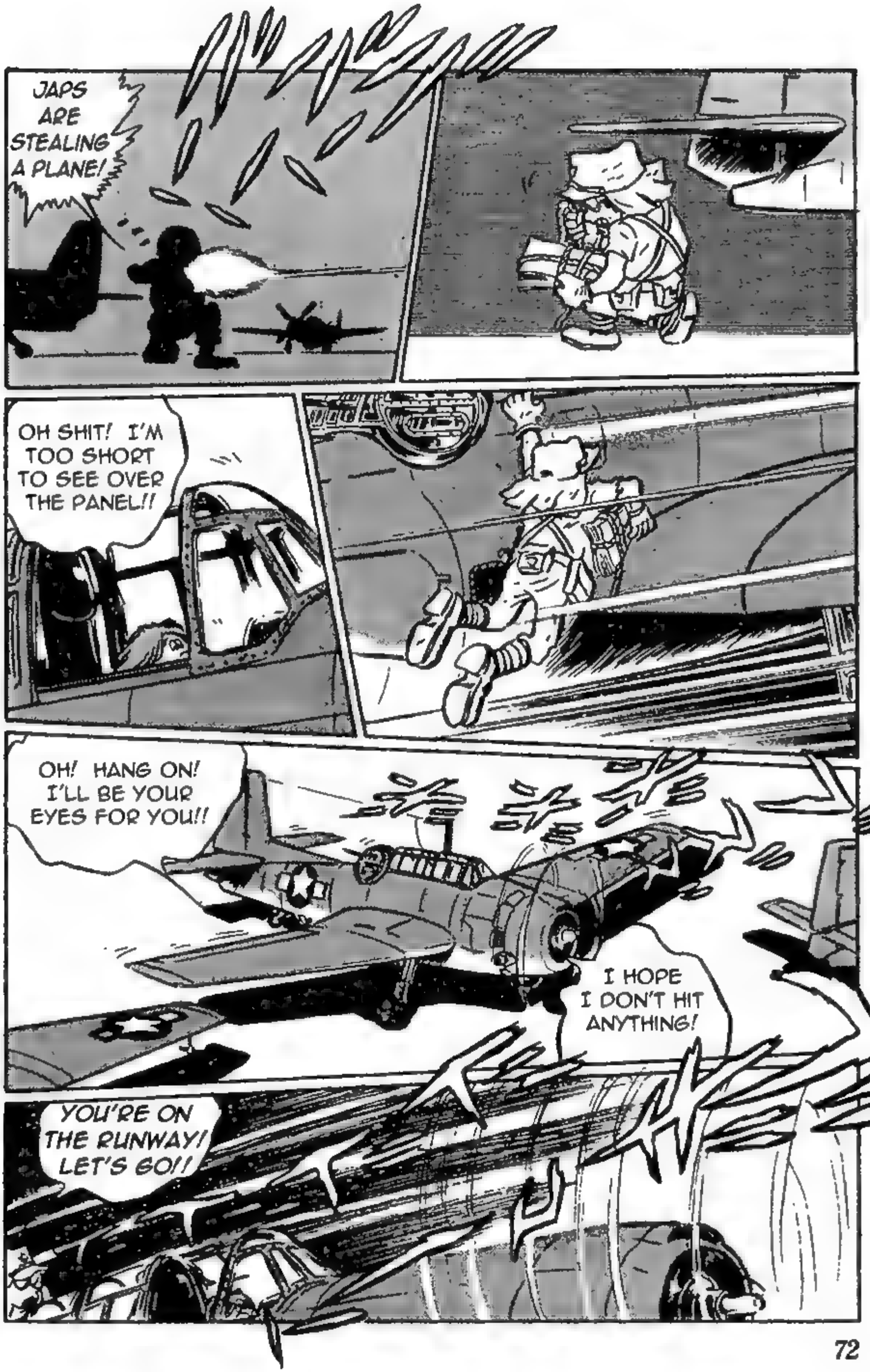
HELP ME ...?! OH, SORRY. THIS NOT BEING ABLE TO HEAR IS A BITCH.

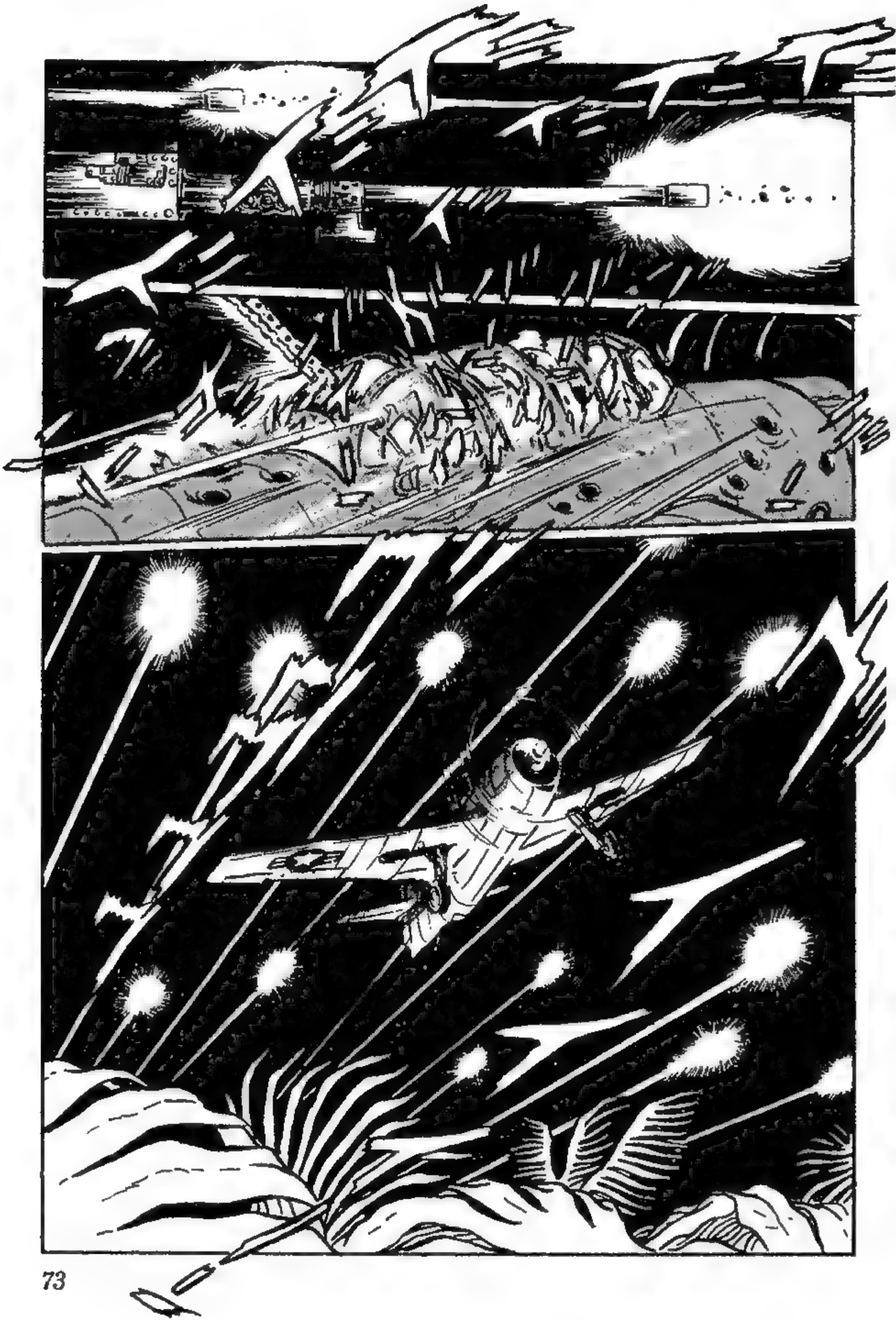
SUNATSUGAWA ... I'M. TRYING. TO. HELP. YOU. NOT. TURN. YOU. IN! IS. THAT. CLEAR?

NOW WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THAT, EH?

!!

COME. ON! MOVE!! HURRY!!!


JAPS ARE STEALING A PLANE!
OH SHIT! I'M TOO SHORT TO SEE OVER THE PANEL!!
OH! HANG ON! I'LL BE YOUR EYES FOR YOU!!
I HOPE I DON'T HIT ANYTHING!
YOU'RE ON THE RUNWAY! LET'S GO!!



ONE OF OUR OWN! LOOKS LIKE 150 METERS WAS JUST RIGHT!!!
HEY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
.... OOOOHHHH ...
NOT THE BEST FLIGHT I EVER MADE. COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 150 METERS OR SO ....
ACTUALLY I'M A SCOUT. I CAME TO CHECK OUT THE CRASH. OUR LINES ARE OVER THERE. FOLLOW ME.

WHO? OH, THE OTHER GUY! HE'S AT THE BACK OF THE PLANE LOOKING FOR SOMETHIN.'

YOU BET! HEY, HAVE YOU SEEN RYOUSKE?

HEY, I'VE GOT SOME RATIONS. WANT 'EM?

WHAT?

I LOST IT WHEN WE CRASHED! I'VE GOT TO FIND IT! YOU GO ON!

HEY! WE'VE BEEN FOUND AND WE GOT FOOD! LET'S GO!!

RYOUSKE. SUNUTSUGAWA! WE'VE. GOT. TO. GO! IF. WE. STAY. AMERICAN. SEARCH. PARTIES. WILL. FIND. US!!

I THINK YOUR FRIEND'S DEAF. ANYWAY WE'VE GOT TO HAUL ASS BEFORE THE AMERICANS CAN GET HERE. TELL YOUR FRIEND TO COME ON!

HERE'S RATIONS FOR BOTH OF YOU.

I'M NOT LEAVING WITHOUT MY MUSIC!!!

WHERE IS IT? I'VE GOT TO FIND IT!

HEY, WAIT FOR ME!

GO AHEAD, MORIYAMA. I'LL CATCH UP AFTER I FIND MY MUSIC, OKAY?

LOOK, I'M HEADING ON. YOU CAN FOLLOW ME OR STAY WITH HIM. YOUR CALL.

AND WHEN I GET BACK TO JAPAN, I AM GOING TO MAKE YOU THE MOST FAMOUS PIECE OF MUSIC IN MUSIC HISTORY! MY BATTLEFIELD SYMPHONY!!

I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU YOU DAMN FOOL.

I CAN'T STAY WITH YOU, SUNATSUGAWA. IF I DID THEN WE'D BOTH BE CAPTURED OR SHOT. I DON'T WANT TO GO BUT I'VE GOT TO.

I WILL FIND YOU, UNDERSTAND! NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE, I'M GOING TO FIND YOU EVEN IF I HAVE TO SEARCH THIS WHOLE DAMN FIELD BY MYSELF!! I WILL FIND YOU!!!

RYOUSKE SUNATSUGAWA NEVER MADE IT BACK TO JAPAN. I NEVER DID FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. MY BEST GUESS IS THAT HE WAS PROBABLY SHOT BY SOMEONE IN ONE OF THOSE AMERICAN SEARCH PARTIES THAT WERE SENT OUT TO SEE IF WE WERE STILL AT THE WRECK OF THE PLANE. I MEAN, WITH HIM BEING DEAF HE WOULDN'T HAVE HEARD THEM COMING, NOR WOULD HE HAVE STOPPED MOVING WHENEVER THEY MIGHT YELL AT HIM TO "HALT." AFTER THAT, HE WAS PROBABLY DUMPED IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE AND LEFT TO ROT. HIS MUSIC? KNOWING THE AMERICANS, IF THEY HAD FOUND IT THEY WOULD HAVE BURNED IT OR CUT IT UP TO MAKE CIGARETTES.

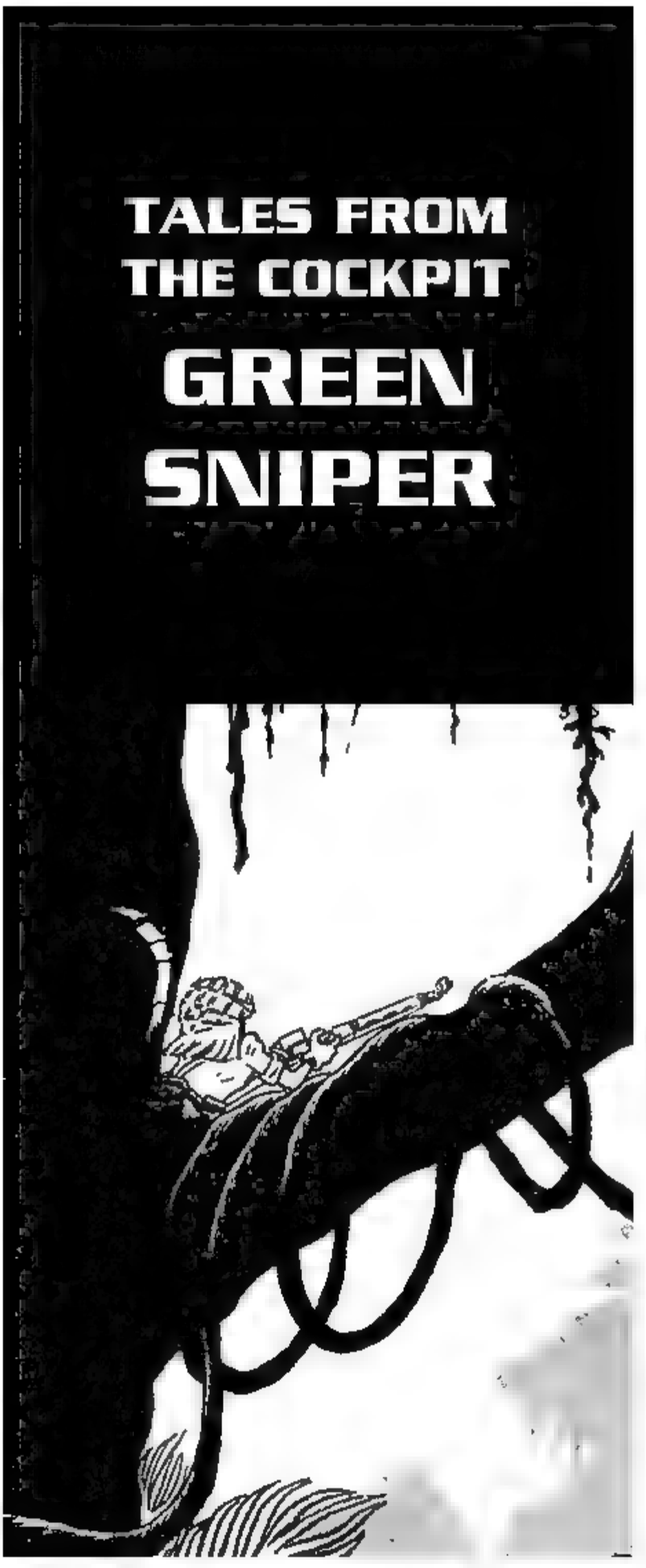
YOU KNOW, I'LL BET THERE'S A SPECIAL PLACE IN VALHALLA FOR KNOTHEADS LIKE HIM. THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL MOST LIKELY FIND HIM ... STANDING AT HIS PODIUM, AND FINALLY CONDUCTING HIS BELOVED "BATTEFIELD SYMPHONY ...."

ENDE

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 29, 1974>

MANDELISMS

"Battlefield Symphony" is one of the more unusual of the many offerings that *The Cockpit* has to share with its readers. Like "Pilot Hunter" in the first volume this too presents a study in obsession. In this case it's not with a battle-hardened guy becoming so obsessed in killing the enemy that he now revels in the sadism of the deed, but instead with obsession of a completely different kind: that of an artist striving to achieve his dream in the middle of a war. For the obsessed Ryouske Sunatsugawa everything has to be suborinated to his dream of completeing and performing his masterwork, his "Battlefield Symphony," and he is willing to move both heaven and earth to make it happen I think all of us who are artists or performers in one form or another can relate to that Where Sunatsugawa goes over the line is that his obsession with his dream has reached destructive levels He even won't let reality interfere with achieving that dream, and of all things wartime reality simply will not be denied like that Over the course of the story he loses his band, his vehicle, his instruments, his hearing, his sheet music, and at the end his own life -- and for what? So that his dream could never be realized? So that his song could be heard only that one time, and even then neither in the form nor the venue he intended for it? Was it worth it? I think you know the answer to that as well as do I. That's the moral of Matsumoto's tale on this occasion. It's one thing to have a dream, and another to do your best to achieve it. It's something else entirely when you let that dream obsess you, because it has the potential to eat you up in the end, just like it did with Ryouske Sunatsugawa.


TALES FROM
THE COCKPIT
GREEN
SNIPER

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, HUMANS HAVE RANKED AS AMONG THE GREATEST OF THE MANY HUNTER SPECIES ON THIS PLANET.

MANKIND WOULD NOT BE WHERE IT IS TODAY WITHOUT HAVING MASTERED THE SKILLS OF MAKING AND USING WEAPONS. WITH THEM HE HAS KILLED EVEN THE GREATEST ANIMAL SPECIES PAST AND PRESENT.

GUADALCANAL

1944

HE HAS ALSO REFINED THE ART OF MAN HUNTING HIS FELLOW MAN.

THERE IS NO MORE LONELY SOUL THAN THE HUNTER ON THE HUNT.

HIS ONLY COMPANION IS THE PREY HE'S TRYING TO KILL ....

LISTEN UP! THERE'S A BLACK TRIGGER IN YOUR AREA! THAT'S A JAPANESE SNIPER! I WANT HIM TAKEN OUT! CLEAR?

YES SIR!

SORRY, LITTLE ONE, BUT DADDY CAN'T COME HOME RIGHT NOW. HE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF A VERY BIG WAR.

GREEN SNIPER

LITTLE BOWLEGGED FREAK! DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD FIGHT US?

AAAGH!!

AND THE ONLY GOOD NIP IS A DEAD NIP, RIGHT?

THAT'S ONE DEAD NIP.

... LITTLE ONE ... DADDY'S ... NOT ....

HEY, DID YOU HEAR THAT?

I'LL LAY ODDS WE DIDN'T GET 'EM ALL, AND THE ONE WE DIDN'T GET IS THE BLACK TRIGGER!
I'D SWEAR I HEARD A RIFLE BOLT BEING PULLED BACK.
WE GOT 'EM ALL! DON'T WORRY!
LYMAN!!! OHMIGAWD!!!

CRUNCH!!

DID YOU GET HIM? LYMAN, DID YOU GET THE BLACK TRIGGER? OVER!

I GOT THEM ALL FOR YOU.

I ... I WAS JUST TALKING ... TO MY LITTLE ONE ... AND ... AND ...

OH NO ....

P... PR ... PRIVATE ... NORIYAMA ...

... HE'S NOT COMING BACK ...

TH-THANKS. LITTLE ONE ... YOUR DAD ... HE'S ...

LITTLE ONE ....

LITTLE ONE, YOUR DAD IS GONE. I'M SO SORRY.
HE'S GONE.
AWK!!!

LYMAN? IT'S ME, WALKER!! DID YOU GET HIM, LYMAN? WHERE ARE YOU?!

AWWW, SHIT!! LYMAN!!!!

IT WAS THAT BLACK TRIGGER! YOU CAN TELL BY THE WAY HE'S BEEN SHOT!

OH YOU STUPID, STUPID FOOL!

DID YOU KNOW HIM, SIR?

SHE'LL NEVER KNOW HER DADDY NOW. NOT EVER.

HE WAS MY BROTHER-IN LAW. HE HAD TWO GIRLS. THE YOUNGEST IS ONLY A YEAR OLD.

THIS IS THE WORST KIND OF WAR, A SNIPER'S WAR ... AND MAY THE BETTER SNIPER WIN!

YOU BET.

YOU'RE A SNIPER TOO, SIR. ARE YOU GOING TO AVENGE HIM?

I'M GONNA KILL THAT BLACK TRIGGER IF IT'S THE LAST THING I EVER DO!

OVER HERE. WHAT IS IT?

WHERE ARE YOU, NORIYAMA?

WE'VE GOT BIGGER NEWS THAN THAT. OUR ORDERS ARE TO WITHDRAW.

HE GOT CARELESS. HE'S DEAD. DID THAT SPECIAL PACKAGE I ORDERED COME IN?

WHERE'S MATSU?

PRIVATE NORYAMA? WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND YOU.

IT'S COMING FOR US.

TOMORROW NIGHT, A NAVY DESTROYER'S GONNA PULL AS CLOSE TO THE COAST AS IT CAN.

WITHDRAW?! ARE YOU CERTAIN ABOUT THAT?

LOOK, I'M JUST THE MESSENGER, OKAY?

BY "US" I TAKE IT YOU MEAN EVERYBODY ELSE, RIGHT? THAT MY ORDERS ARE TO STAY BEHIND AND COVER EVERYONE ELSE'S ESCAPE, RIGHT?

THE BOTH OF US FEEL THE SAME. THAT'S WHY WE VOLUNTEERED TO STAY, SO YOU WOULDN'T DIE ALONE.

I'D RATHER LIVE FOR MY COUNTRY THAN DIE FOR IT.

SO YOU'RE THE BLACK TRIGGER! WE'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU.

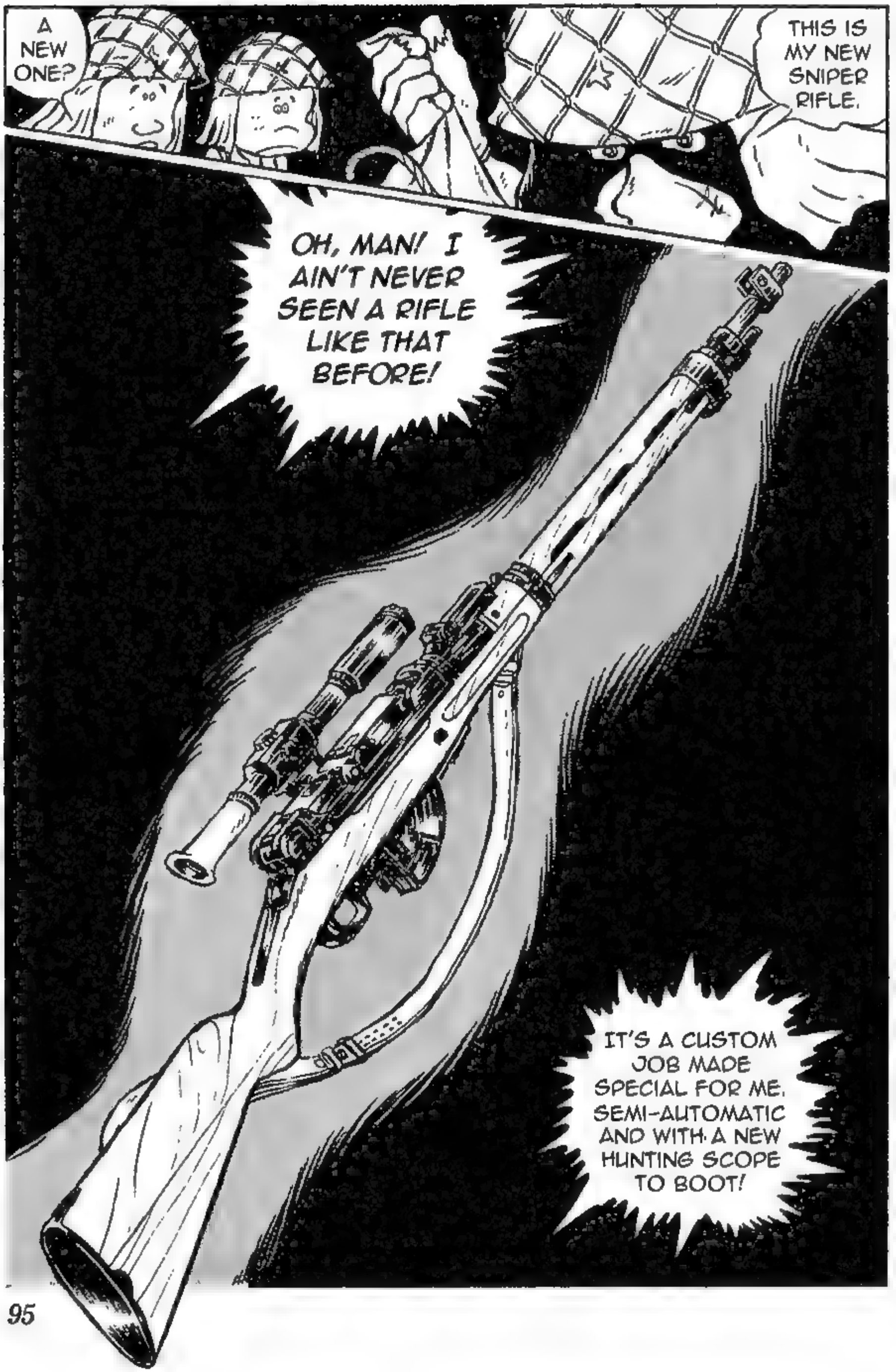
I'M PRIVATE KYUOSHO. THIS IS PRIVATE YAMAKOSHI. PLEASED TO MEET YOU!

NO! WE WERE BOTH ORDERED TO MAKE SURE WE GAVE IT TO YOU DIRECTLY AND NOT TO MESS WITH IT!

AT LAST! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?

WE DON'T. OH! HERE'S YOUR PACKAGE.

I HOPE NEITHER OF YOU HAVE A FAMILY LIKE MATSU.


A NEW ONE?
THIS IS MY NEW SNIPER RIFLE.
OH, MAN! I AIN'T NEVER SEEN A RIFLE LIKE THAT BEFORE!
IT'S A CUSTOM JOB MADE SPECIAL FOR ME. SEMI-AUTOMATIC AND WITH A NEW HUNTING SCOPE TO BOOT!

FAR BETTER THAN THE ONE MY OLD RIFLE HAS!
WHAT A SCOPE!
... SO I CAN HIT TARGETS FROM FARTHER AWAY.
IT ALSO'S FITTED FOR A LARGER AND HEAVER SHELL WITH GREATER RANGE ...
THIS IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN MY OLD ARMY ISSUE ARISAKA!

I'LL BET, USING A SINGLE-SHOT, BOLT ACTION TYPE 38 UP UNTIL NOW.

THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO.

THEY DON'T MAKE CUSTOM RIFLES FOR US PEASANTS. *SIGH*

YOU KNOW, THAT'S THE VERY FIRST SEMI-AUTO SNIPER RIFLE I'VE EVER SEEN. WHAT A GUN!

YOU ... YOU'RE GIVING ME YOUR OLD RIFLE? AW GEEZ, THANKS! I'LL DO MY BEST TO HONOR THIS GIFT!

GET DOWN AND SHUT UP! THAT WAS AN ENEMY SNIPER, AND FROM WHAT I JUST SAW HE'S AT LEAST AS GOOD AS I AM!

YAMAKOSH!!

... GYA ... GAH ... ... GH ...

SHIT! THAT'S ENOUGH!!

AHHH, THERE YOU ARE!

YEAH! HE'S PROBABLY AS GOOD AS I AM! WE'D BETTER LAY LOW AND COME UP WITH A NEW PLAN!

GODDAMN, WALKER, THAT WAS CLOSE! TOO CLOSE!!

THWACK!!

I HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO SET THE SIGHTS ON THIS NEW GUN.

YOU MISSED HIM! A SNIPER AS GOOD AS YOU, AND YOU MISSED HIM!

I DON'T GET IT. HE HAD ME DEAD TO RIGHTS. HE SHOULD HAVE NAILED ME, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO QUESTION MY LUCK. WHAT NOW, FRIEND?

IF I HAD BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO TAKE A FEW TEST SHOTS AND SET THE SIGHTS ON THIS NEW GUN, THEN OUR FRIEND OVER THERE WOULD BE DEAD BY NOW.

YOU SEE, SNIPERS AND THEIR GUNS HAVE TO BE IN TUNE WITH EACH OTHER, AND THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET.

I'M SCARED. ISN'T THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT THIS?

EVERY SNIPER AND EVERY GUN THEY USE HAVE THEIR LITTLE QUIRKS. ONCE YOU GET THE TWO IN TUNE THEN YOU'VE GOT AN UNBEATABLE PAIR.

I DON'T WANT TO GO! I'M ALONE NOW! I'LL STAY WITH YOU, OKAY?

NO! I ... I CAN'T!

'FRAID NOT, 'CAUSE HE'S NOT GOING TO LET ME. LOOK, I DON'T NEED YOU. YOU CAN HEAD FOR THE COAST IF YOU WANT.

FROM HERE TO CAPE MAMIMBO! THIRTY KILOMETERS ROAD'S WORTH OF NOTHING BUT BODIES! DEAD BODIES, ROTTING BODIES, SKELETON BODIES, AND ALL OF OUR MEN! EVERYWHERE! DON'T MAKE ME WALK THAT ROAD AGAIN! PLEASE!!!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE SAW ON OUR WAY HERE? DEAD MEN ALL OVER!

THE ENGINEER WHO MADE THIS GUN FOR ME ... IS HE NOW ONE OF THOSE BODIES TOO? MY FOE OUT THERE ... HAS IT OCCURRED TO HIM HE MIGHT DIE THE SAME WAY, HIS RIFLE CLUTCHED IN HIS BLOODY HANDS?
I'LL GO MAD IF I HAVE TO WALK THAT ROAD AGAIN.

WELL, THAT'S THAT. TIME TO GET BACK TO THE WAR.

THIS IS THE FUN PART. THE WAITING GAME, SEEING WHO SCREWS UP FIRST.

I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU. WHY'D YOU BECOME A SNIPER?

BECAUSE I'M A CRACK SHOT AND I LIKE THE SOLITUDE, I GUESS.

I MEAN, THAT'S NOT SOMETHING JUST ANYONE DOES.

IT'S HARD TO FARM IN THE MOUNTAINS, SO EVERYBODY HUNTS. WE'VE BEEN HUNTERS FOR GENERATIONS. I LEARNED AT AN EARLY AGE.

I WAS AN ONLY CHILD. I GREW UP WITH MY PARENTS IN THE MOUNTAINS.

WHAT TO HUNT AND WHAT NOT, HOW TO SHOOT AND WHEN, BUT MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL HOW TO WAIT. I GOT TO WHERE I COULD WAIT FOR DAYS ON END. HE WAS SO PROUD.

MY FATHER TAUGHT ME HOW TO HUNT. I OWE ALL THAT I AM TO HIM.

LIKE I SAID, IT'S ALL GOING TO BOIL DOWN TO WHO MAKES THE FIRST MISTAKE.

HE PROBABLY WENT THROUGH A CHILDHOOD LIKE MY OWN, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S SO GOOD.

I'LL BET THAT GUY OUT THERE IS THE SAME.

BEFORE THE WAR I WORKED AT A COFFEE SHOP WITH MY BEST FRIEND. WE WERE ALWAYS FIGHTING ABOUT SOMETHING. I'M JUST NOT SNIPER MATERIAL.

I COULDN'T DO THAT. ME? I GREW UP ON A FARM WITH A BUNCH OF NOISY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

A GOOD SNIPER THINKS ABOUT NOTHING SAVE HIM AND HIS PREY. YOU'RE THE ONLY TWO IN THE WORLD.

THAT'S PART OF WHAT BEING A GOOD SNIPER IS ALL ABOUT: BEING WILLING TO BE ALONE FOR A LONG TIME, WITH NO ONE BUT YOUR PREY FOR COMPANY.

HUNTING IS A LONELY BUSINESS COMPARED TO FARMING, BUT WE BOTH LOVE OUR WORK.

IF I HADN'T STARTED YOUNG I'D PROBABLY HAVE HATED BEING ALONE. NOW I'M USED TO IT.

ME? I WAS ALWAYS ALONE. THE NEAREST NEIGHBORS WERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN AND THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY KIDS. ALL I HAD WAS THE HUNT.

I ENVY YOU. YOU HAD A FAMILY AND THAT FRIEND AT THE COFFEE SHOP.

NOT A BAD IDEA.

HEY, NEED A RELIEF? YOU CAN SLEEP, OR PEE OR WHATEVER.

DON'T WORRY. IT'LL RAIN EVENTUALLY.

HEY, THE CANTEEN'S EMPTY! WE GOT NO WATER!

SPRINGFIELD ... DIDN'T THEY MAKE A LOT OF WILD WEST GUNS?

I REMEMBER THE FIRST RIFLE I EVER SAW. IT WAS A OLD AND WORN OUT AMERICAN SPRINGFIELD RIFLE MY DAD HAD.

BE SURE TO GET ME AT ANY SIGN OF TROUBLE. THAT GUY OUT THERE IS FAR BETTER THAN YOU.

I REMEMBER THINKING AS I DID MY PULL-UPS, "GUNS ARE TO SHOOT, NOT DO PULL-UPS." I KNOW NOW THAT'S WHAT HE WANTED ME TO THINK ....

AND MORE. THIS ONE WASN'T ANY GOOD ANYMORE, SO MY DAD MADE A MAKESHIFT PULL-UP BAR WITH IT FOR ME TO USE.

HE'S GONE!

MMH?

"GONE TO GET WATER." OH YOU FOOL!!!

I AM NOT WAITING FOR RAIN COMING DAYS FROM NOW. I'M THIRSTY RIGHT NOW AND I WANT A DRINK.

STILL, I CAN'T RUSH THIS. IF HE SHOULD HEAR ...

LOOK TO THE LEFT, LOOK TO THE RIGHT, ALL SEEMS CLEAR ...

WE CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE.
AAAAHHH ... A JAP WITH A TYPE 38 FITTED WITH A SNIPER SCOPE! CAN'T BE THE BLACK TRIGGER! HE'S WAY TOO CARELESS!
AAH!!!

GOTCHA!

THAT'S THE ADVANTAGE OF A SEMI-AUTOMATIC MIC GARAND SNIPER SPECIAL OVER A SINGLE SHOT, BOLT ACTION TYPE 38.

HRMPH! SO THIS BOW-LEGGED KID WAS THE BLACK--

HE'S TO THE RIGHT, OVER AT THAT CLUMP OF TREES, SIR!

EVERYONE GET DOWN! HE'S STILL OUT THERE!! WALKER!!! YOU HAVE ANYTHING?!!

HE'LL HAVE TO BREAK COVER TO DEAL WITH YOU AND THAT'S WHEN I'LL NAIL HIM!

SIR, AS SOON AS HE FIRES YOU GUYS NEED TO CHARGE! DRAW HIM OUT FOR ME, OKAY?

NOW EVERYONE LISTEN! JAP SNIPERS HAVE SINGLE SHOT BOLT ACTION RIFLES! WHEN HE SHOOTS WE'LL GET A FEW SECONDS BEFORE HE RELOADS!

YOU HEARD HIM! FIRE!!!

YEOOOO

THAT'S HIS ONE SHOT! NOW DRAW HIM OUT FOR ME!!!

SURPRISE, SURPRISE, AND NOW I'VE GOT MY SIGHTS SET, FRIEND.

OH NO! HE'S GOT A SEMI-AUTOMATIC SNIPER RIFLE TOO!!

BUT WHICH IS THE HUNTER, AND WHICH IS THE PREY?

SO NOW IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US, HUNTER AND PREY.

YOU SIT AND WAIT, AND HE SITS AND WAITS, WAITING FOR THAT ONE MISTAKE ....

THIS REMINDS ME OF THAT PUMA I HUNTED WHEN I WAS A LOT YOUNGER, BACK STATESIDE IN THE HILLS OF KENTUCKY ....

... AND THEN IT SAUNTERED STRAIGHT INTO MY SIGHTS LIKE I WASN'T EVEN THERE. SUCH A MAGNIFICENT BEAST ....

I SHIVERED IN THE COLD FOR TEN DAYS, WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT ....

I'VE HAD TO WAIT FOR THE RIGHT CHANCE, THE RIGHT MOMENT TO KILL SOME FORM OF PREY FOR MOST OF MY LIFE ....

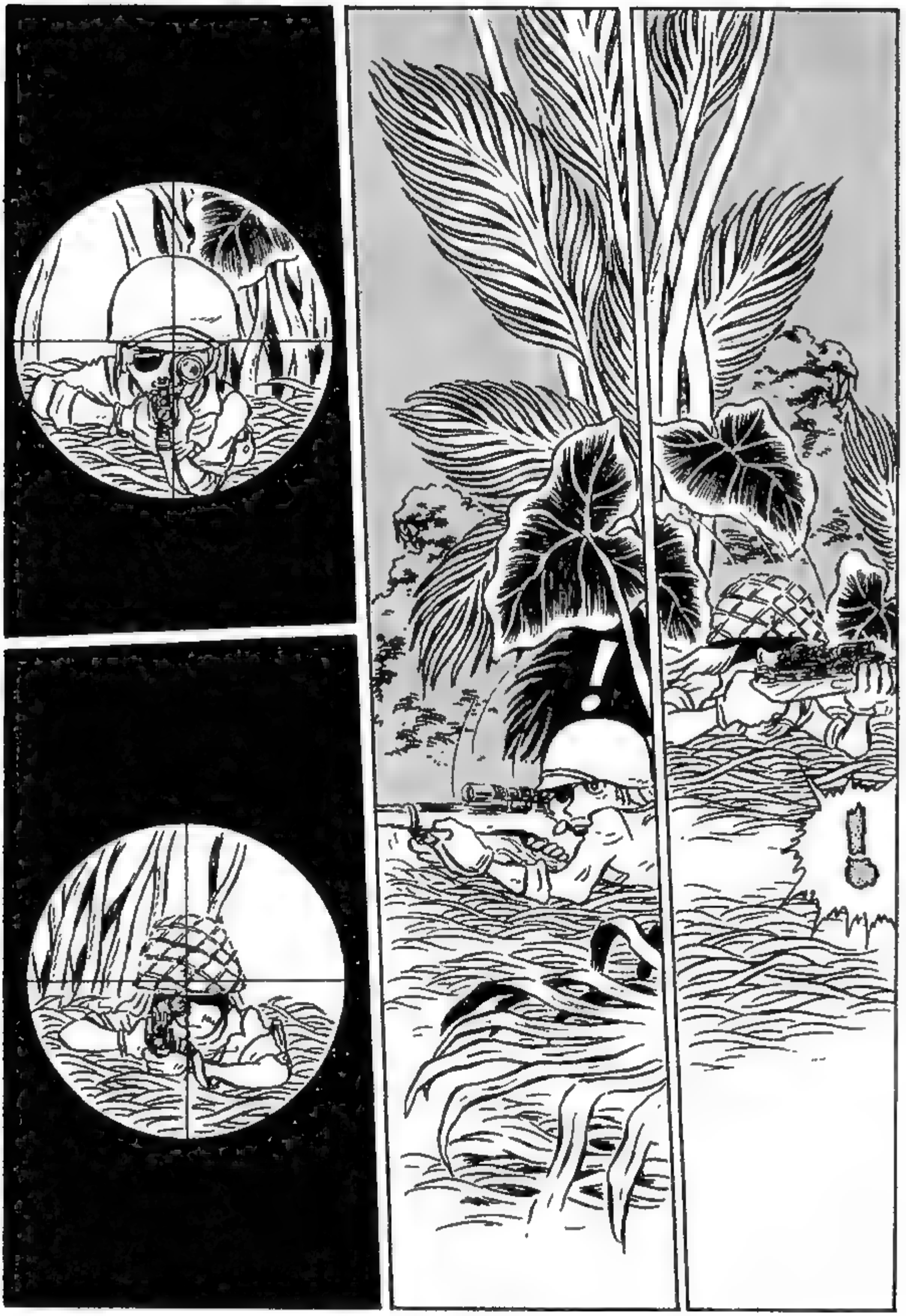
YES, THE WAITING GAME. ONE OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL PARTS OF A SNIPER'S JOB ....

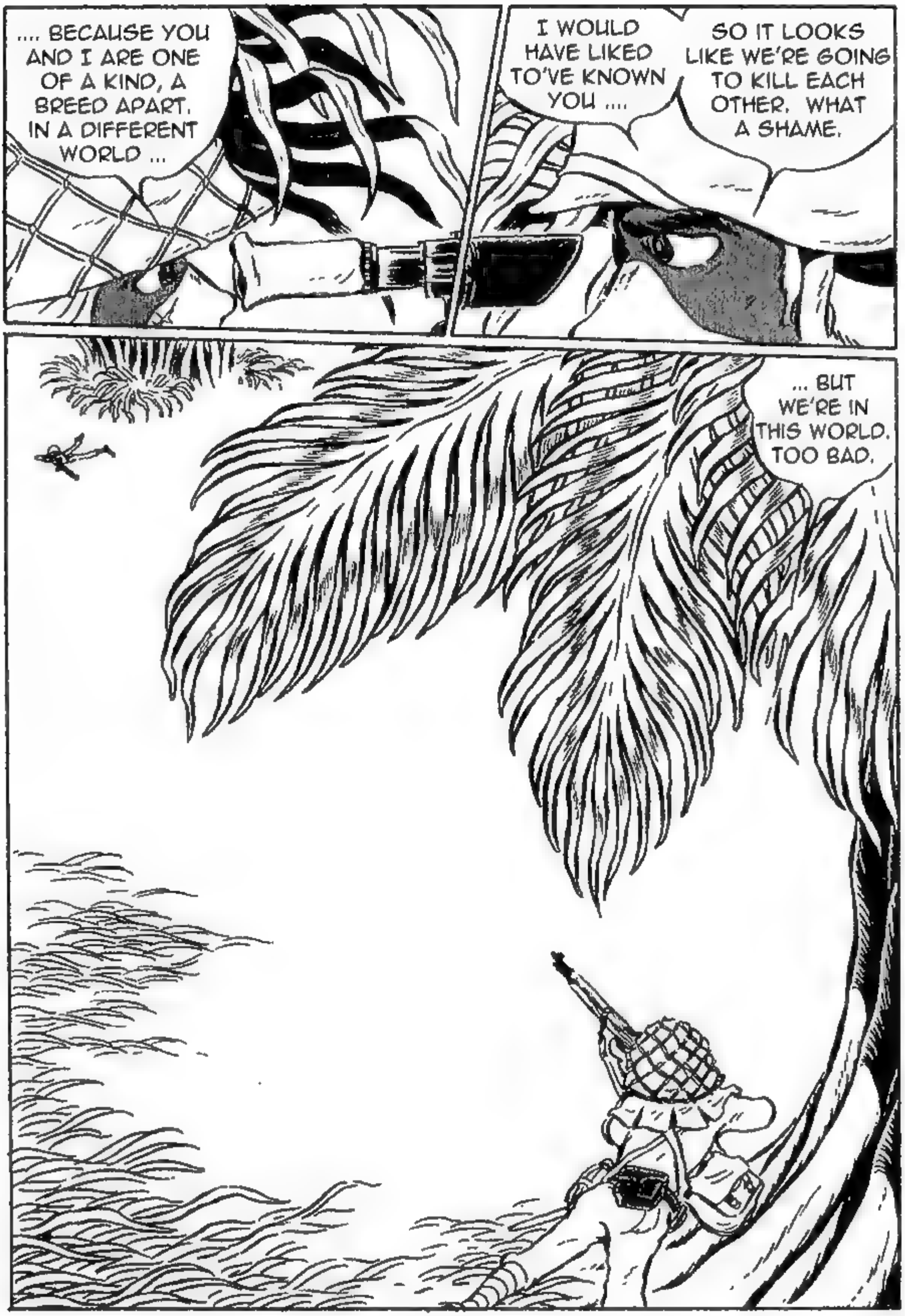
I REMEMBER THINKING HOW LONELY I WAS GOING TO BE, NOW THAT THE PUMA WAS DEAD ....

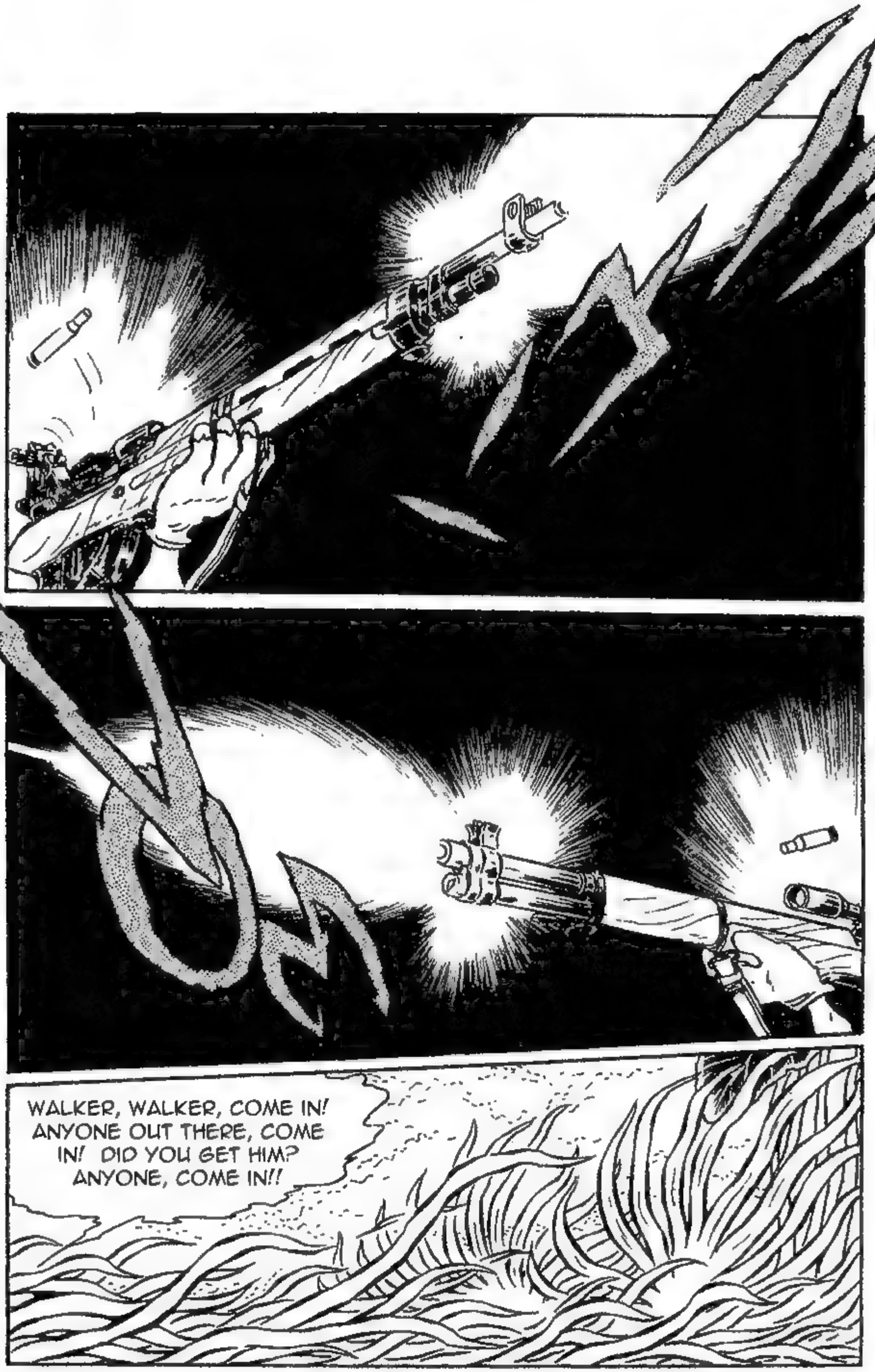
MY PREY WAS MY ONLY COMPANION ... MY ONLY FRIEND ....

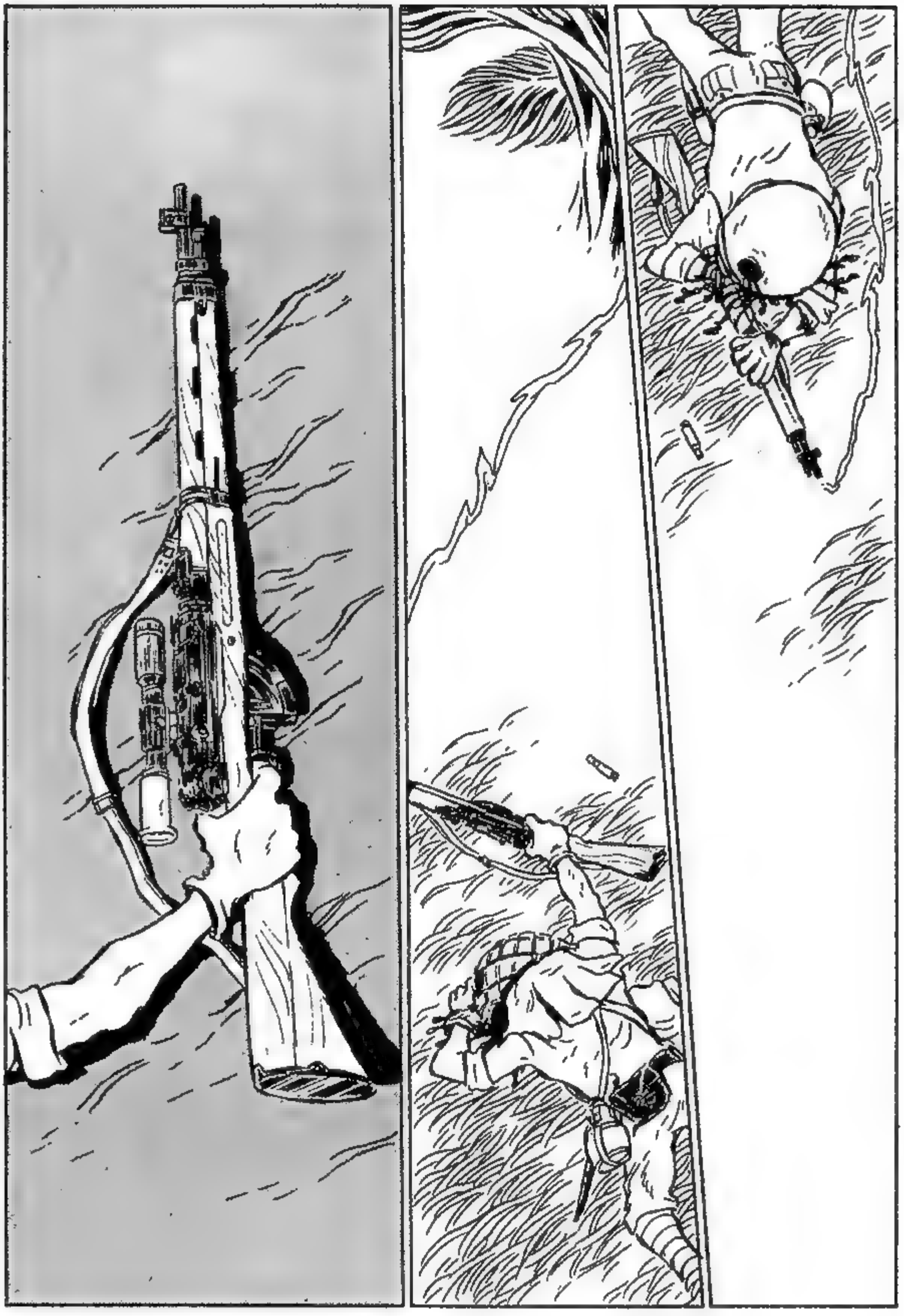
YES, FRIEND. IT'S JUST YOU AND ME ... AS YOU KNEW IT WOULD BE.

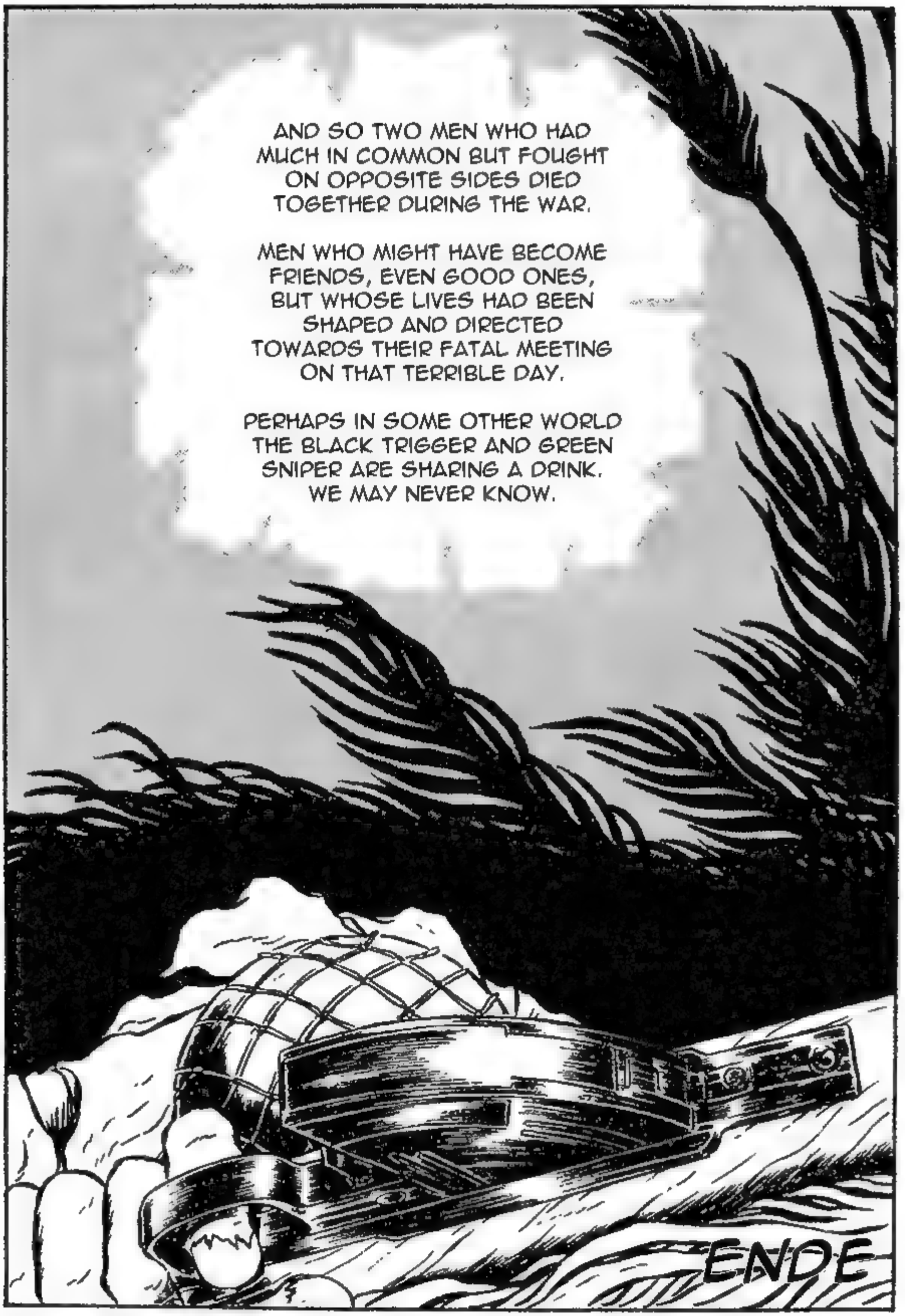
WELL, MY FRIEND OUT THERE, IT'S JUST YOU AND ME.




.... BECAUSE YOU AND I ARE ONE OF A KIND, A BREED APART. IN A DIFFERENT WORLD ...
I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO'VE KNOWN YOU ....
SO IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO KILL EACH OTHER. WHAT A SHAME.
... BUT WE'RE IN THIS WORLD. TOO BAD.


WALKER, WALKER, COME IN! ANYONE OUT THERE, COME IN! DID YOU GET HIM? ANYONE, COME IN!!




AND SO TWO MEN WHO HAD MUCH IN COMMON BUT FOUGHT ON OPPOSITE SIDES DIED TOGETHER DURING THE WAR.
MEN WHO MIGHT HAVE BECOME FRIENDS, EVEN GOOD ONES, BUT WHOSE LIVES HAD BEEN SHAPED AND DIRECTED TOWARDS THEIR FATAL MEETING ON THAT TERRIBLE DAY.
PERHAPS IN SOME OTHER WORLD THE BLACK TRIGGER AND GREEN SNIPER ARE SHARING A DRINK. WE MAY NEVER KNOW.
ENDE

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 41, 1973>

MANDELISMS

Remember that story told by the PBY crew early ın "Pılot Hunter," about the German and Russian snipers at Stalingrad who wound up killing each other? Here in "Green Sniper" you get a Pacific theater variation on the same theme with two equally matched snipers, one Japanese and one American, clashing ın their own unique form of war and with a lot of their support personnel getting killed in the process until in the end it's just the two of them and with only one trıgger pull left from each of them to end the matter You know how thıs kınd of story almost ınevıtablly ends What's fascınatıng ıs watchıng what both of them go through to get to that final fatal moment The endıng, durıng whıch both of them are pretty much thınkıng the same thıng as one prepares to kıll the other, always remınds me of the Romulan Commander's final lıne from the classıc *Star Trek* epısode "Balance of Terror " To quote, "In a dıfferent realıty I could have called you friend." That's one way of summıng up what this partıcular tale from *The Cockpit* has to say.

BTW and in the context of this story a *green sniper* is one who operates in the jungle or heavily forested areas. It's also used as a reference term at one point for Walker the American sniper, whose uniform is green in contrast with Private Noriyama's Imperial Army tan. BTW in real life and although it ısn't shown in M-san's tale Japanese snipers often wore green netting with foliage stuck in it to better hide themselves just like their American counterparts, so the term green sniper can actually apply to both of them. It should not be confused with the modern interpretation, which is a custom sniper rifle that's painted green or in green camo.

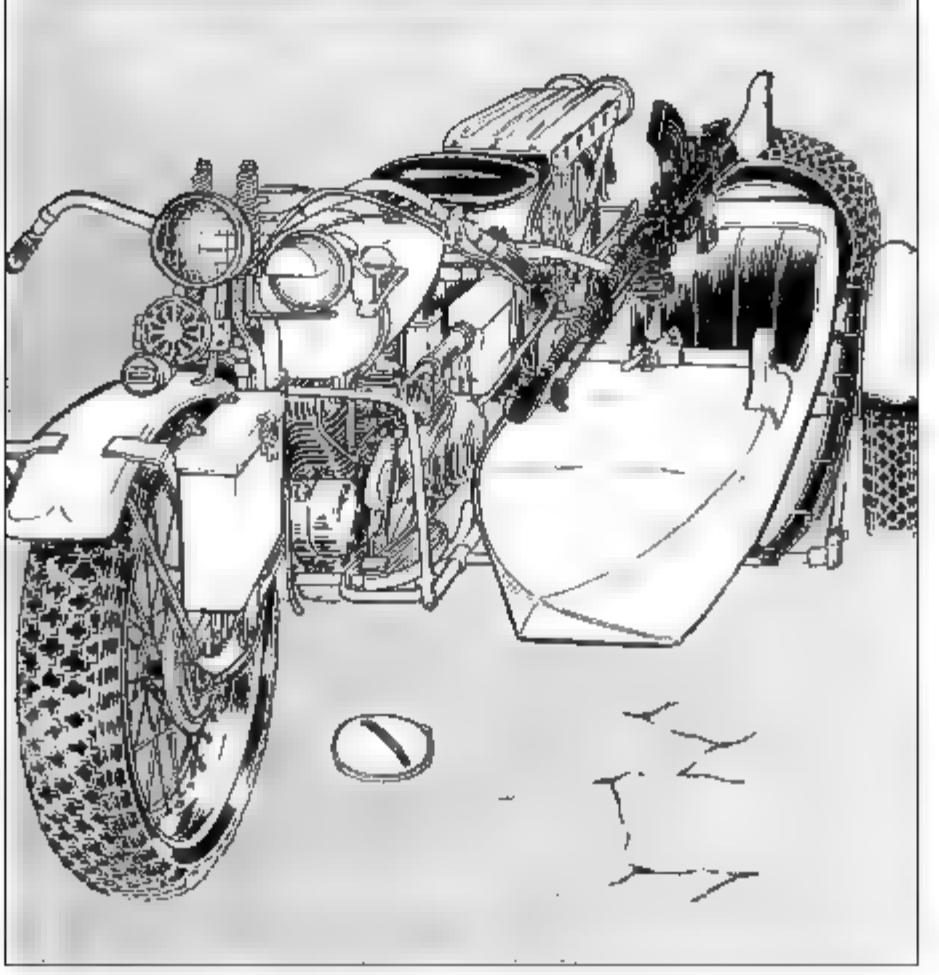
The term *black trigger* has several possible interpretations. While it was never the official nıckname for Japanese snipers based on what I can currently look up, I do find references to replacment trıggers and trigger guards for all varıatıons on the Arısaka rıfle Made late ın the war, these were made of a dıfferent metal alloy mıx and looked almost black when compared wıth older versıons Maybe that's from where ıt comes I'm open to better suggestıons on thıs one

The two guys you see helpıng Noriyama and Walker in the story are acting as spotters. They cover the sniper's back with regards to other enemy units ın the area while the sniper concentrates on nailing the desired target.

Fınally I ran across an ınterestıng dıscussıon on one of the onlıne mılıtary blogs trying to identify Noriyama's sniper rifle. None of the blog's participants apparently knew Japanese, because it says in the story that it was a custom model made on special order for him and thus wasn't standard Imperial Army ıssue. One of the bloggers had a good point, though, in that it somewhat resembled the late war standard issue Type 4. It was first issued in 1944, same as the story, and its design was derived in part by reverse engineering captured examples of the Amerıcan M1 Garand. Walker, the Amerıcan sniper, ıs usıng an M1C, the rare sniper varıant of the M1 Garand

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

STEEL DRAGOON



NO ONE HAS CROSSED THIS PLAIN IN CELEBANKA IN YEARS SAVE FOR ME AND THE WINDS THAT STILL SWEEP ACROSS IT. THE DAYTIME SKY IS AS BLUE AS I REMEMBER IT ....

THAT RUSTING MOTORCYCLE WITH THE SIDECAR AND MACHINE GUN OVER THERE, ONE THAT MIGHT EASILY BE MISTAKEN FOR AN AMERICAN HARLEY-DAVIDSON ....

SOMETIMES I STILL HEAR THE SOUND OF ITS ENGINE, AND THE VOICES OF THE TWO MEN WHO RODE IT ....

I WAS A SOLDIER IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY DURING WORLD WAR II. LATE IN THE WAR I WAS PART OF THE FORCES THAT WERE SENT ...

... EAST TO THE PHILIPPINES, AFTER MACARTHUR HAD RETAKEN IT AS HE HAD PROMISED.

I WAS A SCOUT RIDER. MODERN DAY CAVALRY, YOU MIGHT SAY. I RODE A MOTORCYCLE AND CARRIED A MACHINE GUN, AND I WAS VERY GOOD WITH BOTH. AHH, SO LONG AGO ....

STEEL DRAGOON

I REST MY HAND ON THAT RUSTED MOTORCYCLE. IT'S BEEN THIRTY YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW IT, AS IT RACED ACROSS THAT PLAIN DURING THE WAR ....

IT SLUMBERS NOW IN ETERNAL SLEEP, YET IT WAS ONCE ALIVE, AND VERY MUCH SO, AS IT LIVES NOW IN MY MEMORY.

SO LONG AGO ....

TARGET, FRONT AND LEFT! RANGE, 15,000 METERS TO THE ENEMY POSITIONS!

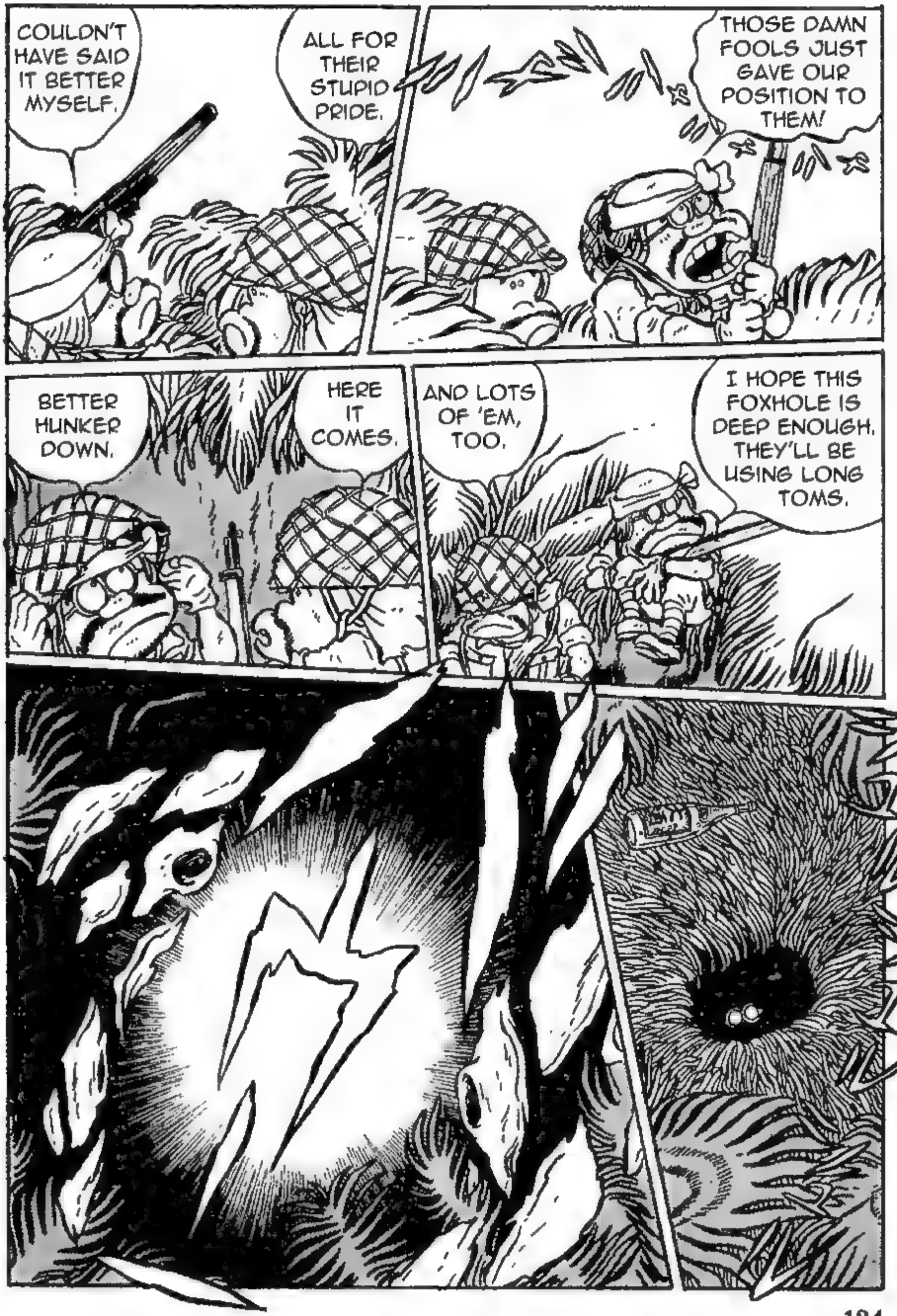
IT WAS IN THE FALL OF 1944, DURING THE ORMOC VALLEY CAMPAIGN, AS WE MOPPED UP THE LAST OF THE JAPANESE IN THE PHILIPPINES ....

WELL, THEY DRAGGED THOSE DAMN GUNS ALL THE WAY HERE FROM JAPAN, AND THEY'LL BE DAMMNED IF THEY DON'T USE THEM AT LEAST ONCE!

THEY'RE NOT GOING TO SHOOT THAT THING, ARE THEY? THEY'RE CRAZY! THIS ISN'T GOOD!!

OH SHIT! WE'D BETTER FIND SOME COVER!

FIRE!


COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER MYSELF.
ALL FOR THEIR STUPID PRIDE.
THOSE DAMN FOOLS JUST GAVE OUR POSITION TO THEM!
BETTER HUNKER DOWN.
HERE IT COMES.
AND LOTS OF 'EM, TOO.
I HOPE THIS FOXHOLE IS DEEP ENOUGH. THEY'LL BE USING LONG TOMS.

WHAT A MESS.

I THINK IT'S OVER. I'LL TAKE A LOOK.

I COULD JUST KILL THOSE ... NO, WAIT. I'LL BET THEY'RE DEAD NOW.

DAMN! THIS IS NOT GOOD!

DO I LOOK ALL RIGHT?! SOMEBODY JUST RAN OVER ME!!

KODAI, YOU ALL RIGHT?

?!

OWW!!

IT'S A DISPATCH RIDER!

HE'S LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, I DON'T THINK THAT BIKE'LL EVER RUN AGAIN.

ALL RIGHT, FELLA! OFF YOU COME FOR SOME AID!

POOR FELLA ... NO, WAIT! I THINK HE'S STILL BREATHING! YEAH! HE'S ALIVE!

HE MUST HAVE BEEN COMING HERE WHEN THE AMERICANS OPENED UP WITH THEIR LONG TOMS.

... I ... I'M ... MOTHER ...

WHY ... HE'S JUST A KID! CAN'T BE ANY OLDER THAN 16 TOPS!

OOH, A TANKER PISTOL!

HA-HA-HAH! GO GET THE BOY SOME MILK -- I MEAN SAKE!

MOTHER?

STOP CALLING ME SIR, AND AS FOR ...

PVT. UTSONOMYA REPORTING, SIR! I'M HERE TO GET THE AIRFIELD SOME REINFORCEMENTS, SIR!

THAT'S MINE, SIR!

TOO BAD HE'S STILL ALIVE, 'CUZ IF HE WEREN'T THEN THESE'D BE MINE.

AND A TYPE 100 SMG! THIS KID IS SET UP!

THE AMERICANS JUST GOT THROUGH WIPING OUT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING HERE. SORRY, KID.

REIN-FORCE-MENTS, WELL ...

THE AIRFELD'S IN AMERICAN HANDS NOW! AREN'T YOU LISTENING, KID?!

WHEN I LEFT THE AIRFIELD GARRISON WAS STILL HOLDING OUT. THAT'S WHY I WAS SENT HERE, SO WE COULD GET REINFORCEMENTS FOR A PROPER RETREAT.

SOUTH?! KID, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ON THE ROAD! SOUTH MEANS AMERICANS!

IN THAT CASE I'VE GOT TO GO BACK SOUTH TO THE AIRFIELD WITH THE BAD NEWS!

SIR, DOES A MAN BREAK HIS WORD? I'VE GOT TO GO BACK. I MADE A PROMISE.

THE AMERICANS ARE ONLY 15,000 METERS THAT WAY AND THAT'S THE WAY YOU JUST CAME FROM YOUR TIRE TRACKS. UNDERSTAND?!

KID, JUST LISTEN, OKAY?

I'VE GOT TO GO BACK. I'M SORRY. I MADE A PROMISE AND I'VE GOT TO GO BACK TO KEEP IT.

AND HOW, PRAY TELL, ARE YOU GOING TO GET BACK? THIS BIKE IS TRASHED!

OUR ORDERS WERE TO HOLD FAST AND STAND OUR GROUND. I HAVE TO TELL THEM THEY'RE ON THEIR OWN.

I DON'T CARE HOW MANY AMERICANS I HAVE TO GO THROUGH, I'M GOING BACK.

HE'S NOT HEARING ME. OH, BOY ....

YOU GOT NO GAS OR OIL, YOU GOT HOLES IN YOUR CRANKCASE AND GAS TANK -- NEED I GO ON?

HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LISTENING?! IF YOU GO BACK SOUTH YOU'RE DEAD!

THEN I'LL FIX THIS BIKE, OR WALK IF I HAVE TO!

THE OTHERS TOOK ALL THE GOOD ONES WHEN THEY LEFT!

THEN I'LL GET ANOTHER VEHICLE.

NO, THAT'S NOT IT. WHAT'S THE ONE FOR WHEN YOU GET OFF YOUR MOUNT TO FIGHT LIKE A GRUNT?

HIM AND THAT BIKE. MAKES ME THINK OF THE OLD MOUNTED CAVALRY -- THE, AHH, UHH, THE RYUKISHI*, YOU KNOW?

WHAD'DY'A KNOW? HE PASSED OUT. POOR KID.

BUT I'VE GOT ... TO GO ... BACK ...

THE COSSACKS, THE FRENCH DRAGOONS, THE AMERICAN SEVENTH CAVALRY, EVEN THE BRITISH ON OCCASION.

NOT TO MENTION SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS ARMY UNITS BEING CAVALRY.

AS I WAS SAYING, CAVALRY'S KEPT UP WITH THE TIMES EVEN IF THEIR MOUNTS ARE NOW IRON AND STEEL.

RYUKIHEI.+ I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE POINTS FOR BEING CLOSE.

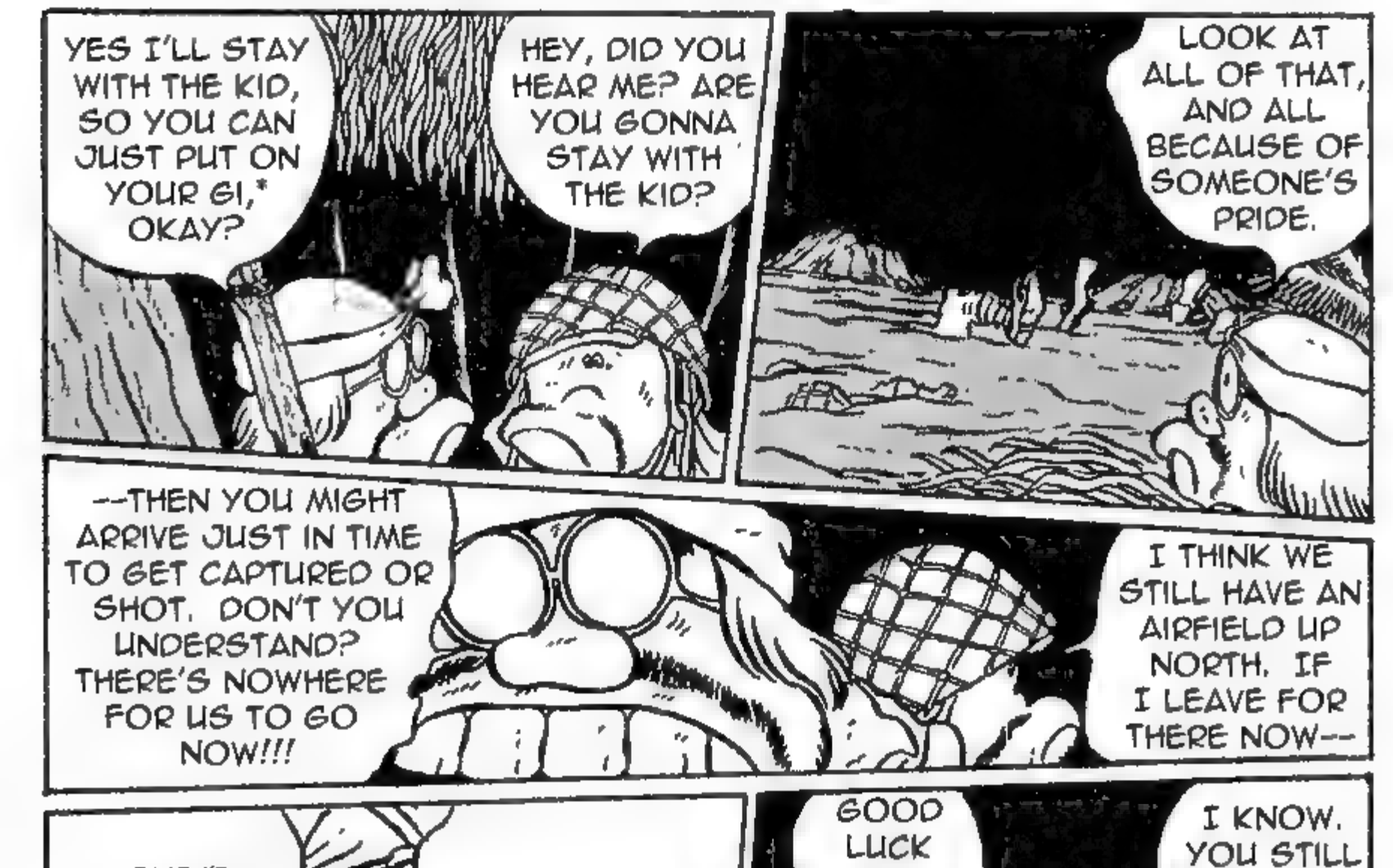
BUT THAT MEANS THAT SOMEBODY'S GONNA HAVE TO STAY HERE AND KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.

I SAY WE LET THE KID SLEEP. HE'S EXHAUSTED AND HE NEEDS ALL THE SLEEP HE CAN GET.

YEAH. TOO BAD THAT BIKE IS TOAST. IT WAS A NICE BIKE.

RYUKISHI - LIT. "DRAGON KNIGHT," ONE WHO FIGHTS "FROM THE SADDLE."
RYUKIHEI - LIT. "DRAGON SOLDIER," ONE WHO DISMOUNTS TO FIGHT.

(*) LIT. "YOU CAN UNSTICK YOUR SHORTS" OR "DON'T GET YOUR PANTIES IN A WAD." XD


YES I'LL STAY WITH THE KID, SO YOU CAN JUST PUT ON YOUR GI,* OKAY?
HEY, DID YOU HEAR ME? ARE YOU GONNA STAY WITH THE KID?
LOOK AT ALL OF THAT, AND ALL BECAUSE OF SOMEONE'S PRIDE.
--THEN YOU MIGHT ARRIVE JUST IN TIME TO GET CAPTURED OR SHOT. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THERE'S NOWHERE FOR US TO GO NOW!!!
I THINK WE STILL HAVE AN AIRFIELD UP NORTH. IF I LEAVE FOR THERE NOW--
... I WON'T ABANDON YOU ... I'M COMING BACK ....
... I'M COMING BACK. YOU'LL SEE ... I WILL! I AM COMING BACK! ...
GOOD LUCK WITH THE KID.
I KNOW. YOU STILL GOTTA TRY.

IT-IT'S ALMOST MORNING! WHY DIDN'T YOU WAKE ME?! I'VE GOT TO GO!!

HOWDY. SLEEP WELL?

WE GOT MORE?! *NOM-NOM-NOM!!* I'M SO HUNGRY! *NOM-NOM-NOM!!* I'VE HAVEN'T HAD A GOOD MEAL IN-- *NOM-NOM!!*

EAT ALL OF IT! WE GOT MORE!

EAT FIRST! GET YOUR STRENGTH! HAVE SOME RICE!!

WE'RE ALONE? *URP!*

FIGURES. ANYWAY, THOSE ARTILLERY BOYS LEFT IT BEHIND WHEN THEIR SURVIVORS TOOK OFF WITH ALL OF THE SURVIVING VEHICLES.

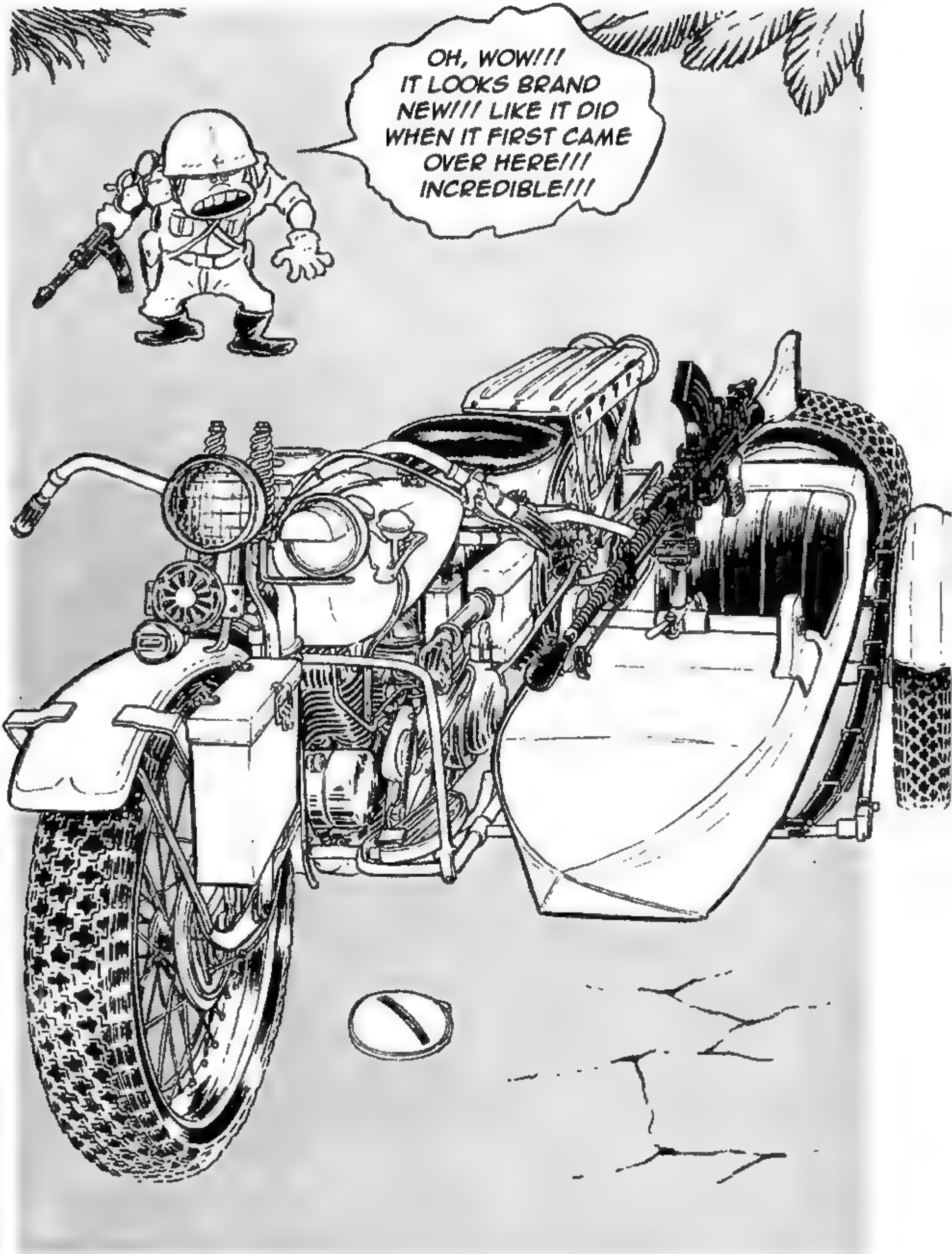
OH THANK YOU! BUT WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?

HERE! EAT! FILL UP! IT'S JUST GOING TO GO TO WASTE ANYWAY.

MY BIKE? YOU MEAN THEY'VE FIXED MY BIKE?! IT'LL RUN AGAIN?! BUT IT WAS IN SUCH BAD SHAPE!! IT ...

SOMEONE HAD TO COOK THE RICE, AS WELL AS GETTING YOUR BIKE ALL FIXED BACK UP.

HUH?


OH, WOW!!!
IT LOOKS BRAND NEW!!! LIKE IT DID WHEN IT FIRST CAME OVER HERE!!!
INCREDIBLE!!!

YEAH, THAT TOO! I'M GLAD THEY GAVE YOU A RIKUO. THOSE ARE COPIES OF THE AMERICAN HARLEY DAVIDSON, WHO MAKE SOME OF THE BEST BIKES EVER MADE.

A NEW BATTERY!

WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE MOTOR POOL STILL HAD MOST OF EVERYTHING AND THE REST IS SALVAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, YOUR NEW HEADLIGHT IS OFF OF A WRECKED KUROGANE.*

... AND WHEN YOU START HER, JUST ONE KICK. THAT'S ALL. JUST ONE.

YOU'VE EVEN GOT A FULL TANK OF GAS ...

... THAT WAS WRECKED AND DIDN'T NEED 'EM ANYMORE, BUT WE WILL.

GOT THE MACHINE GUN AND MOUNT FROM A TRUCK ...

WELL, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO ALL OF OUR RIDING AT NIGHT, AREN'T WE?

THE NEW HEADLIGHT EVEN HAS THE COVER!

DOES IT MATTER, KID?

THIS IS AMAZING! WHO DID ALL OF THIS?

I CAN EVEN SING!

YOU CAN'T DRIVE AND MAN THE GUN TOO! BESIDES, I'M A COMBAT SPECIALIST! I'M GOOD WITH GUNS AND FIXING THINGS! I'M ALSO A DAMN GOOD COOK IF I SAY SO MYSELF

BUT SIR! YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME WITH ME! I MEAN--

YOU DRIVER, ME GUNNER.

KUROGANE - A TYPE OF JAPANESE ARMY LIGHT SCOUT VEHICLE IN USE DURING WORLD WAR II. IT'S JUST AS FAMOUS IN ITS OWN WAY AS THE WILLYS JEEP, THE GERMAN KUBELWAGEN, AND THE RUSSIAN GAZ-61

BOTTOMS UP!!!

THEN I'LL DRINK FOR BOTH OF US! LIKE ALL OF THAT LOVELY RICE, WE DON'T WANT THIS GOOD SAKE GOING TO WASTE!

YOU SHOULDN'T DRINK AND DRIVE, SIR. YOU KNOW THAT.

WANT ONE FOR THE ROAD?

THIS IS GREAT! IT RUNS SO SMOOTH!

ONE KICK IS RIGHT! AMAZING!

I HAD TO GET MINE FROM A PILOT WHO DIED. YOU'RE SO LUCKY.

YOU KNOW HOW STUFF PILES UP WHEN YOU'RE OLD.

WHERE'D YOU GET THE MUFFLER AND GOGGLES?

LET ME GET THESE THINGS SET.

THE WAY THIS BIKE IS RUNNING, SIR, I'LL BET WE CAN FLY!

THAT'S THE SPIRIT! NOW LET'S GET GOING, AND YOU CAN OPEN HER UP!

IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. I'VE GOT MINE AND YOU GOT YOURS AND THAT'S THAT!

THAT'S SAD. YOU THINK THEY'D HAVE ISSUED YOU SOME FROM THE START.

YOU DRIVE, I'LL DRINK!!

HERE WE GO!!

I WISH I HAD BEEN ABLE TO THANK THE MECHANIC!

THIS IS THE BEST THIS BIKE'S EVER RUN, AND I MEAN THAT, SIR!

THIS IS GREAT!

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I'M SURE HE APPRECIATES IT.

HE DID A FANTASTIC JOB FIXING THIS BIKE BACK UP!

YEEHAH!!

THIS BIKE IS LIKE GOOD SAKE! IT'S THE REAL THING!!

IT'S NOT JUST THE MOTOR! SHE HANDLES SMOOTH TOO!

THANK YOU, SIR!

YOU REMEMBERED THE HEADLIGHT COVER! GOOD!!

I WAS PLANNING TO ANYWAY, SIR. THERE WERE AMERICAN BIKE PATROLS THE LAST TIME I CAME THROUGH HERE.

OPEN 'ER UP! LET'S HAUL SOME ASS!!

SOUNDS LIKE A JAP BIKE.

WE'LL RIDE UNTIL SUNRISE AND THEN FIND A PLACE TO REST.

LET ME TRY FIRST!! AFTER THAT IT'S YOUR TURN!!!

SHIT!!

HEY! WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE!!

I THINK HE'S GONNA CRASH.

OF ALL THE .... HEY, LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN TROUBLE.

PROBABLY DIDN'T. WANNA BET HE'S AN AMERICAN? I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE.

THAT PILOT ACTED LIKE HE DIDN'T KNOW HIS OWN PLANE!

IT'S NOTHING. JUST A STOMACH ACHE.

THEY GET ONE OF OUR PLANES, LURE US OUT, AND-- HEY, ARE YOU OKAY?

AH! I WAS RIGHT!

FIGURES, GIVEN ALL THAT RICE YOU ATE.

A DIRTY TRICK BUT THAT'S WAR.

WAR IS NEVER FOUGHT FAIR, KID, NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY. YOU USE EVERY TRICK TO WIN AND MORE.

WE'VE DONE THINGS TO THEM JUST AS BAD IF NOT WORSE, KID. IF I HAD THE TIME I'D TELL YOU SOME OF THEM.

THAT'S A DIRTY THING TO DO, TRICKING OUR SOLDIERS LIKE THAT AND THEN MOWING THEM DOWN! I SAY IT'S DISHONORABLE, SIR, ABSOLUTELY DISHONORABLE.

I'LL BE FINE, SIR. IT'S JUST THAT ... WELL ... THIS BIKE IS ME. WE BOTH CAME OVER TOGETHER FROM JAPAN. IT'S PART OF ME NOW IN A WAY I CAN'T DESCRIBE.

HEY KID, YOU LOOK TIRED. YOU WANT ME TO DRIVE?

WAR BRINGS OUT THE GOOD AND BAD IN US ALL.

THAT'S SAD, SIR, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT.

I DO.

I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, SIR.

I GET THE FEELING THAT IF IT GOES, THEN I'LL GO. IF I GO, THEN IT'LL GO. IT'S MY HEART, MY SOUL, MY ...

IT WOULD BE COOL SAVE FOR THE FACT THAT IT MIGHT JUST GET US BOTH KILLED.

HERE WE ARE, YOU AND I, BOTH MODERN HORSE SOLDIERS RIDING INTO BATTLE ON OUR MODERN STEEL HORSE.

MOST OF THEM DIED WITH THEIR MOUNTS IN BATTLE, BOTH BEING TAKEN OUT AT THE SAME TIME.

MY FRIEND AND I WERE TALKING ABOUT CAVALRY.

I PREFER THIS IRON STEED, SIR. IT'S MORE PERSONAL.

OF COURSE NOW THE'VE GOT TANKS AND ARMORED CARS AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE THEY'LL COME UP WITH NEXT FOR MOUNTS.

WE'LL STILL MAKE IT.

I SEE.

ABOUT AN HOUR STRAIGHT RIDING, SIR, ASSUMING NO MORE TROUBLE WITH THE AMERICANS, BUT THE DAYLIGHT WILL CATCH US FIRST.

ABOUT HOW FAR ARE WE FROM THIS AIRFIELD OF YOURS?

WASTEFUL OR NOT, I MADE A PROMISE AND A PROMISE IS A PROMISE, SIR.

BUT WOULDN'T US BOTH DYING BE WASTEFUL?

I'M STILL GOING BACK, SIR. I MADE A PROMISE.

IT'S KIND OF POINTLESS, YOU KNOW, IF THE AMERICANS--

LET'S FIND SOME PLACE NICE WHERE WE BOTH CAN TAKE A NAP AND BE GOOD AND RESTED FOR TONIGHT.

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME WE FIND A PLACE TO HOLE UP.

I'LL BE FINE, SIR.

YOU OKAY?

THEN SLEEP IN THE SIDECAR.

IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME, I PREFER TO STAY WITH MY BIKE.

FROM HERE IT'S ONLY TWENTY MINUTES TO THE AIRFIELD, STRAIGHT SHOT. I GUESS THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY.

THANKS, SIR.

I'LL MAKE ME A NEST OVER HERE LIKE THE EAGLES DO.

WELL, WELL! AN AMERICAN BOMBER, LANDING AT YOUR AIRFIELD! IMAGINE THAT!

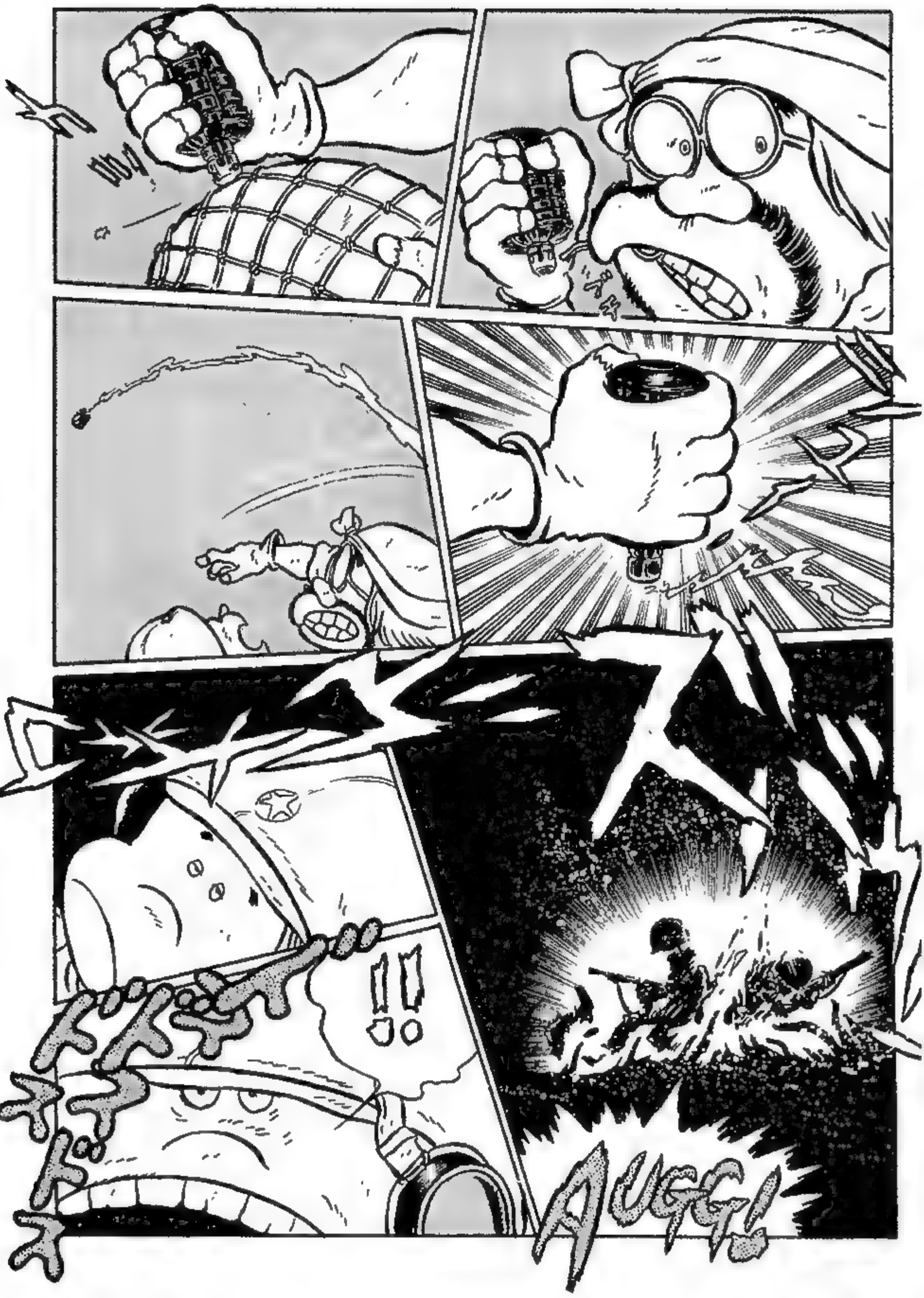
MAYBE ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS WHO USED TO BE AT THE AIRFIELD AND ALL OF MINE ARE SHINING DOWN ON US.

THAT'S ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHTS IN THE WORLD.

SKNZX ...

YOU'RE A FOOL TO GO, AND I AM TO GO TOO.

WHAT TH--?! UH-OH.


!!
AUGH!

SHUT UP AND MAN THE GUN!! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING! THIS IS MY BIKE!! I SHOULD BE THE ONE DRIVING! STOP RIGHT NOW AND--

AAH!!

DAMN, BUT HE'S GOOD!

HOW CAN YOU TELL?

YOU SEE HOW HE SHOOTS WITH ONE HAND AND DRIVES WITH THE OTHER? THAT GUY'S A PRO!

YEAH! WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND FOOLISH LIKE YOU! KNOW WHAT? I LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT!

THEN IT WAS YOU!

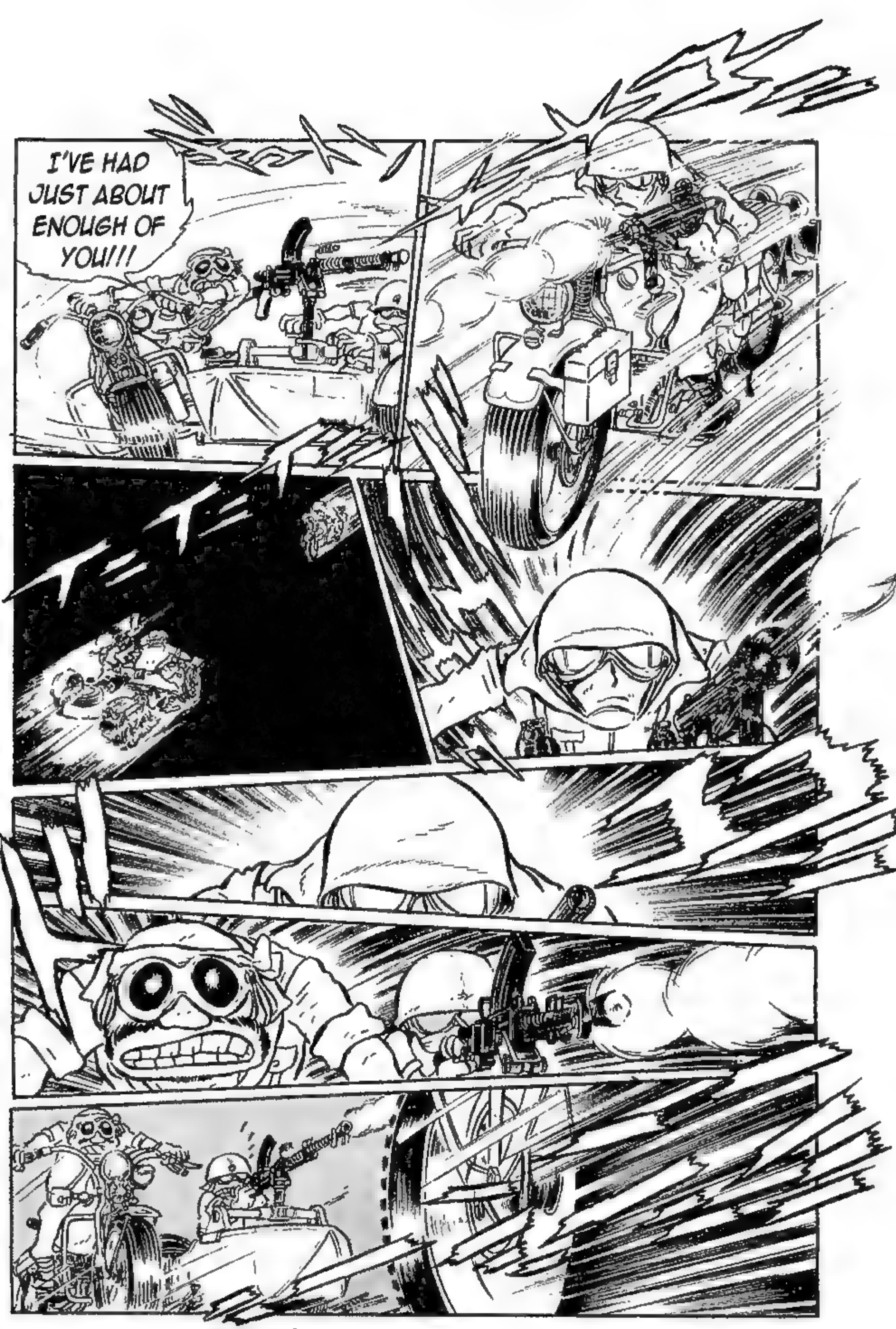
I USED TO RACE AND WORK ON BIKES BEFORE THE WAR.

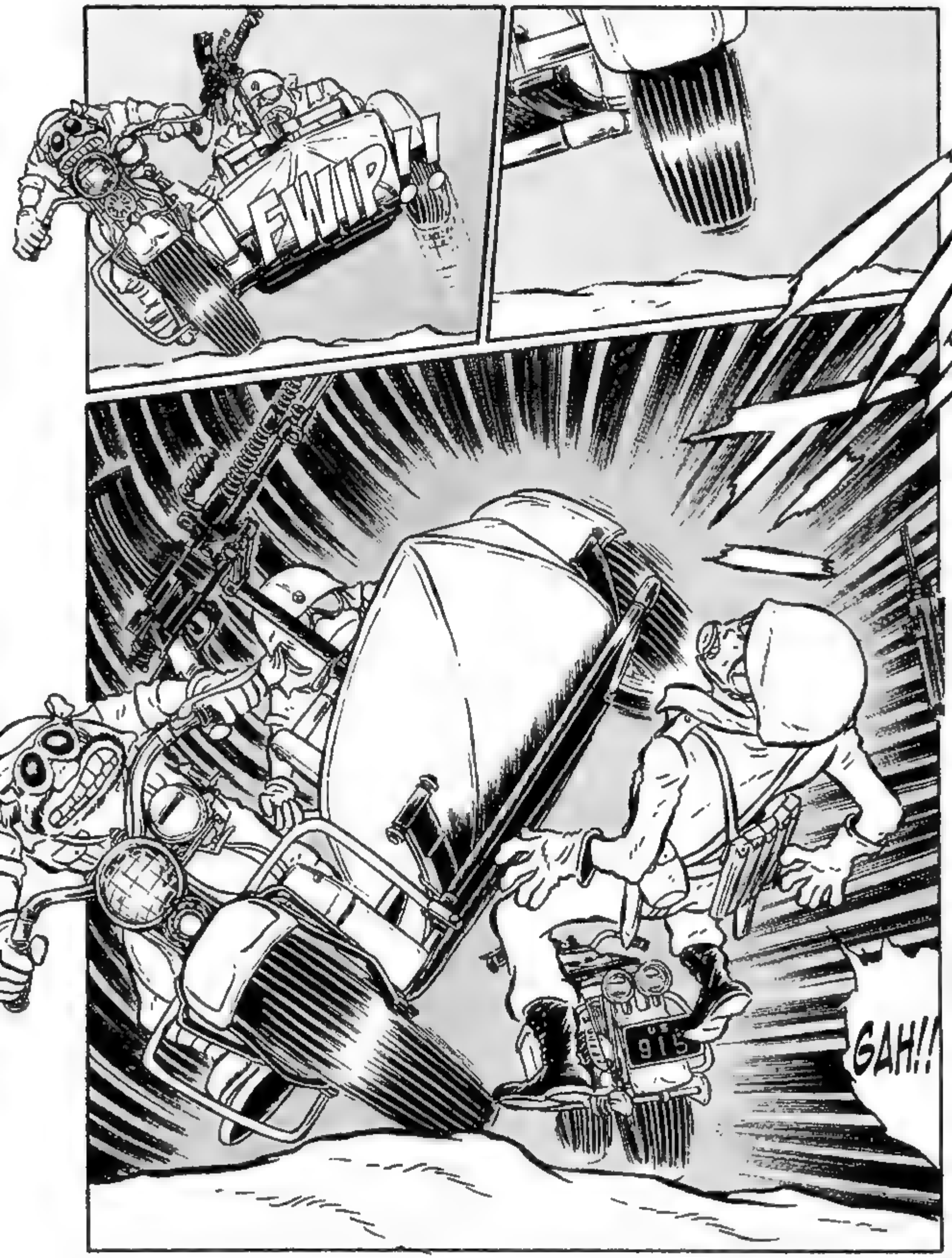
NO TIME! MAN THE GUN!! HE'S COMING BACK!!!

WHY YOU--

SO I'M A LIAR TOO.

YOU LIED TO ME! YOU LED ME TO BELIEVE SOMEONE ELSE DID IT!


I'VE HAD JUST ABOUT ENOUGH OF YOU!!!


FWIP!
GAH!!

HE'S TOO GOOD A DRIVER! HE DESERVES TO LIVE AND RACE ANOTHER DAY!!

WHY DIDN'T YOU FINISH HIM OFF, SIR?!?!

SIR! LET ME TAKE OVER!

YOU'RE YOUNG! GO HOME! HAVE A FAMILY! NAME YOUR ELDEST AFTER ME!

KODAI! DON'T LEAVE ME!!

KODAI!

AT LAST YOU SEE THE LIGHT ... BUT IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME. YOU SEE, THIS IS GOING TO BE MY LAST RACE. I NEVER FINISHED A RACE. I ALWAYS BROKE DOWN OR SOMETHING ELSE.

SIR! DON'T! THERE'S NO POINT NOW!!!

... MY LAST FINISH LINE. I'M SORRY, KID.

BUT THIS IS MY LAST RACE, AND THAT AIRFIELD ...

ALL I HAVE TO DO IS MAKE IT TO THE AIRFIELD. NOTHING ELSE MATTERS AFTER THAT.

I WAS A GOOD RACER, EVEN IF I NEVER WON A RACE, BUT I'M GONNA DO MY DAMNDEST TO WIN THIS ONE!

LIKE I TOLD YOU! LIVE! GO HOME! FIND A GIRL! HAVE KIDS!! AND REMEMBER ME!!!

SO I'M NOT BACKING OUT NOW FROM MY LAST RACE EVER. YOU HEAR ME, KID?!

IF I HAD KNOWN ... BUT I DIDN'T ... AND NOW ... AND NOW IT'S ... TOO ... LATE ....

BUT ... BUT KODAI ... I CAN'T! ... I WAS SHOT BY THAT PLANE! ... I ... I'M NOT GOING HOME. EVER ....

YOU SEE THOSE? FLARES. THEY KNOW I'M COMING. THEY'RE READY.

THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T COME WITH ME, KID. YOU'RE YOUNG, AND LIFE IS FOR THE YOUNG!

★426

LET HIM HAVE IT!!!!

... NO ... NO I'M NOT ... I DID ALL RIGHT ...

NO ... I COULDN'T DO IT ... THE ODDS ... THEY WERE JUST TOO GREAT ...

I'M STILL A FAILURE ....

... OOHHH ...

... KODAI ...

... IT ... IT WAS A ... GOOD ... LIFE ....

... I'M SATISIFIED ...

... I DID MY BEST ... THAT'S ALL ... THAT MATTERS.

KILL THAT CRAZY JAP!!!

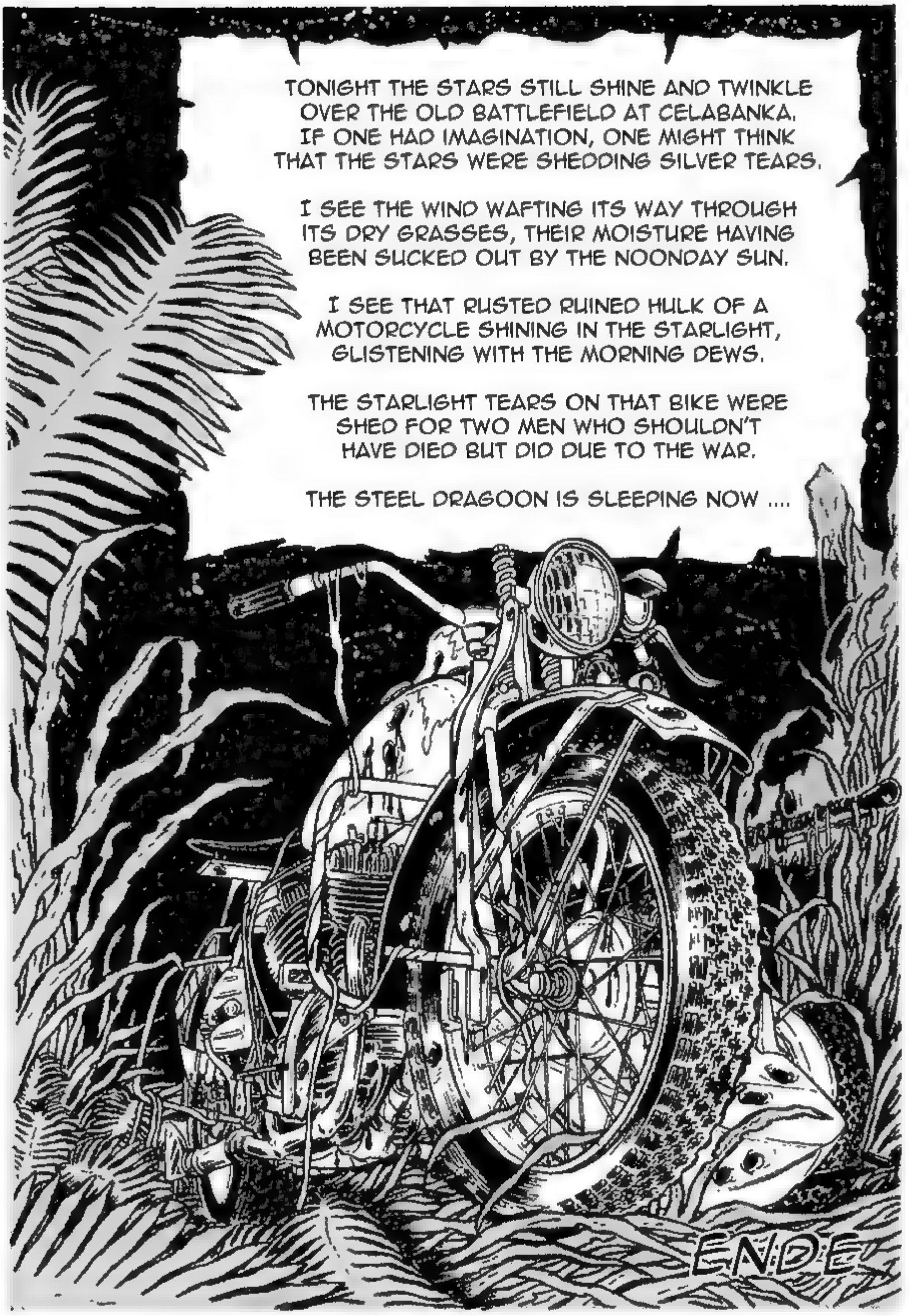
BOO!!!

YOU WANNA KILL US ALL?!

I SMELL GAS! STOP!!

THAT GUY ... HE WAS SOMETHING ELSE.

YOU COULD HAVE KILLED ME BUT YOU LET ME LIVE. I'M GRATEFUL.
WHAT A WASTE. I KNOW WE WERE ENEMIES, BUT STILL ... WHAT A WASTE.


TONIGHT THE STARS STILL SHINE AND TWINKLE
OVER THE OLD BATTLEFIELD AT CELABANKA.
IF ONE HAD IMAGINATION, ONE MIGHT THINK
THAT THE STARS WERE SHEDDING SILVER TEARS.
I SEE THE WIND WAFTING ITS WAY THROUGH
ITS DRY GRASSES, THEIR MOISTURE HAVING
BEEN SUCKED OUT BY THE NOONDAY SUN.
I SEE THAT RUSTED RUINED HULK OF A
MOTORCYCLE SHINING IN THE STARLIGHT,
GLISTENING WITH THE MORNING DEWS.
THE STARLIGHT TEARS ON THAT BIKE WERE
SHED FOR TWO MEN WHO SHOULDN'T
HAVE DIED BUT DID DUE TO THE WAR.
THE STEEL DRAGOON IS SLEEPING NOW ....
END

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 24, 1974>

MANDELISMS

As all of you know by now this was the first of the three stories that were remade in animated form for *The Cockpit* OVA, although in that it's the last of the three to be presented. I know a lot of others have already waxed eloquent over that version, so I'm just going to limit myself to what few differences there are between the original manga and the later anime version.

First I will admit to altering the texts and dialogue in places so they would better fit inside the text bubbles available I also made a conscious effort not to ape the anime version, but to go with the text of the original manga whenever I could and falling back on the anime only in thoes cases where Google Translate AI failed me You'll be pleasantly surprised when you find out how close the anime version is to my English adaptation of the manga original, although there are those interesting little differences I'm about to mention.

I added the bit at the beginning of the former American scout rider describing his background and compacted the original openning narration so readers of the English language version could get a better grip on that character. My doing this was inspired by the framing story that M-san uses in "'88' at Point Blank Range" centered on the otherwise minor character of Arthur Adams Trenter in that tale.

Only the manga version identifies Utsonomoya's motorcycle, although many who have seen the anime version have already commented on its likeness to a prewar Harley Davidson. It's an Imperial Army Type 97, better known as the Rikuo, and it was in fact derived from a legally licensed Harley clone sold in prewar Japan under the Rikuo name Rikuo in Japanese means "king of the road," by the way

The famed U S Army's 155mm "Long Tom" heavy field gun makes a cameo in numbers early on in the manga, whereas in the anime the kind of gun that the Americans use to blast the Imperial 28th Regiment out of existence is never identified.

I altered the original manga's discussion about the use of cavalry over the years, which is not present in the anime BTW, so I could include the terms *ryukishi* and *ryukihei*. These are actually formal terms but they do distingush between those who fight "in the saddle" and those who dismount to fight. The Western analog for the latter is *dragoon* (a French military term) and this is why the word dragoon appears in most Western translations of this story's title. I also note that when this part of the anime OVA was first translated and released by fans, it was done under the title "Steel Ryukihei." XD

BTW the airplane that appears in this story is not identified in either version. It's a Kawasaki Ki-61 Hien, code name "Tony" and also nicknamed the "Japanese Mustang" given its likeness

TALES FROM THE COCKPIT

MEKONG SUNSET

MEKONG SUNSET

TODAY THE SURFACE OF THE MEKONG RIVER IS COVERED IN MAYFLIES. IT USUALLY IS DURING THE WARM MONTHS OF THE YEAR.

THEY REMIND ME OF ALL THOSE I KNEW DURING THE WAR WHO DIED BEFORE THEIR TIME ....

THEY SHOULD HAVE LIVED AND GROWN OLD AS DID I AND ALL OF THE OTHERS WHO WERE SPARED, BUT I GUESS THEIR TIME CAME SOONER THAN IT DID FOR THE REST OF US.

GRANDPA! ISN'T IT GORGEOUS? I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT!

YES, YES ....

YES, YES ....

HEY, DID YOU HEAR THAT? SOUNDED LIKE A GUN!

YES ....

LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE GOOD FISHING TODAY.

NOW IT'S GONE. MORE LIKE AN ECHO THAN THE REAL THING.

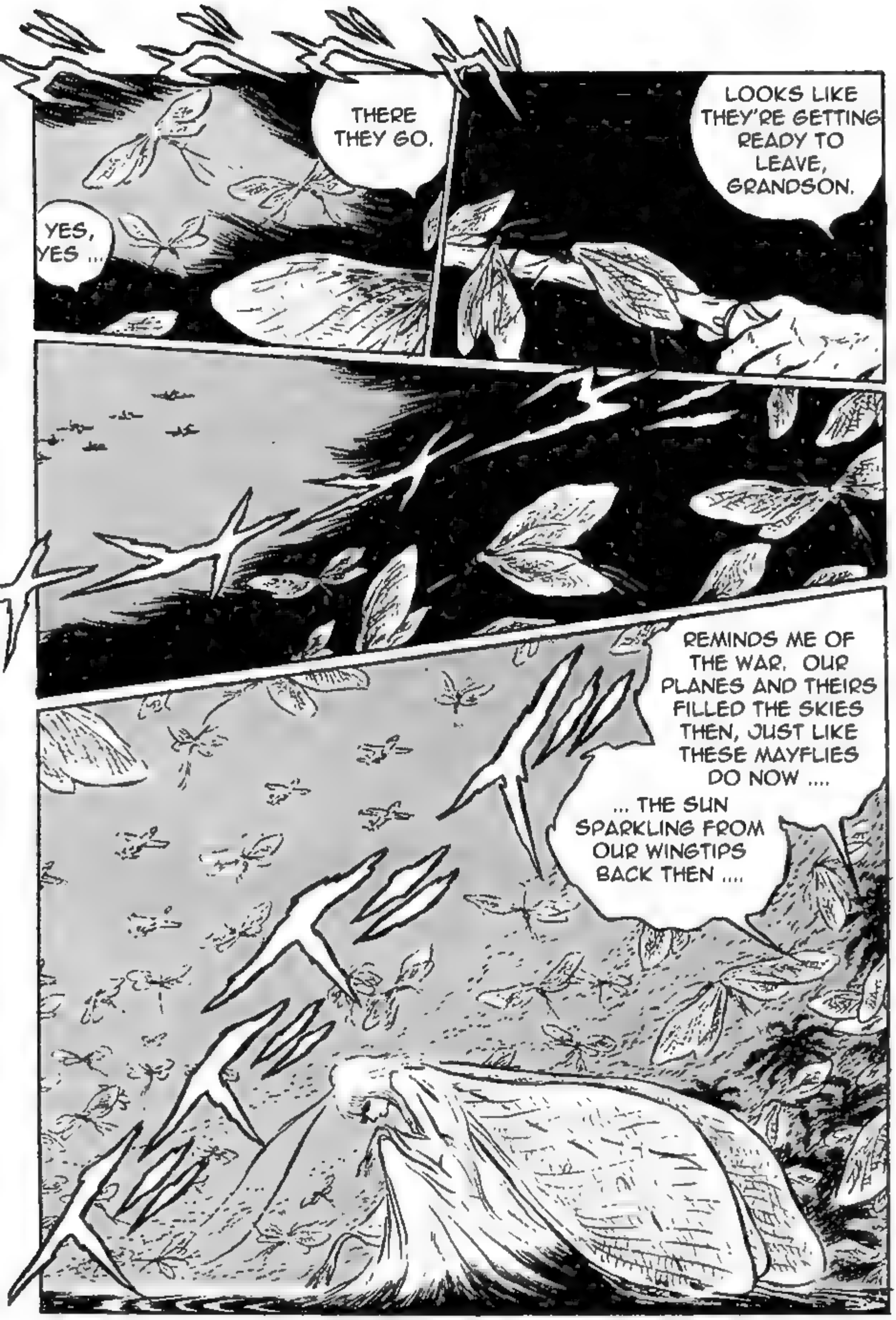
YES, YES ....

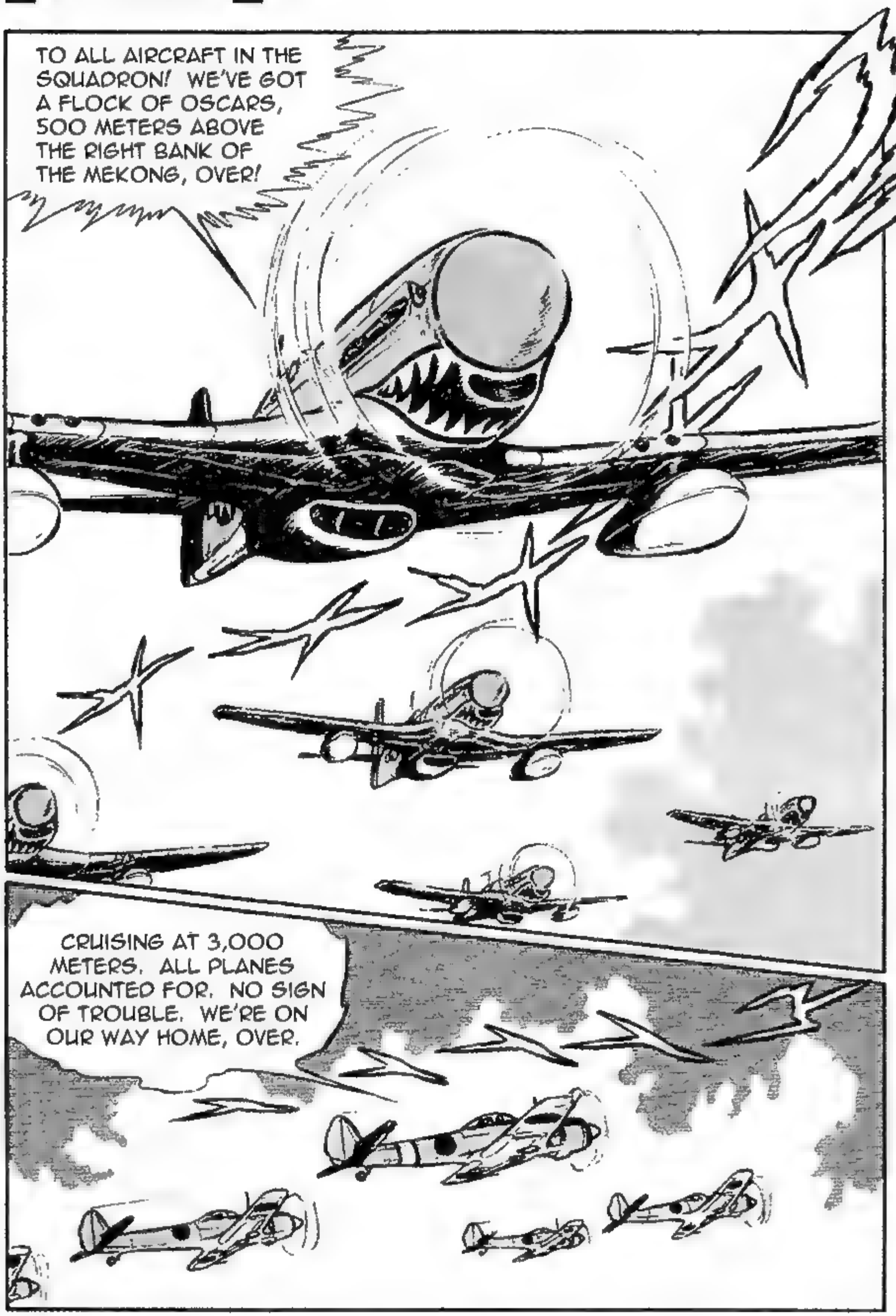
LIKE A PLANE READY TO TAKE OFF.

YES, YES ...

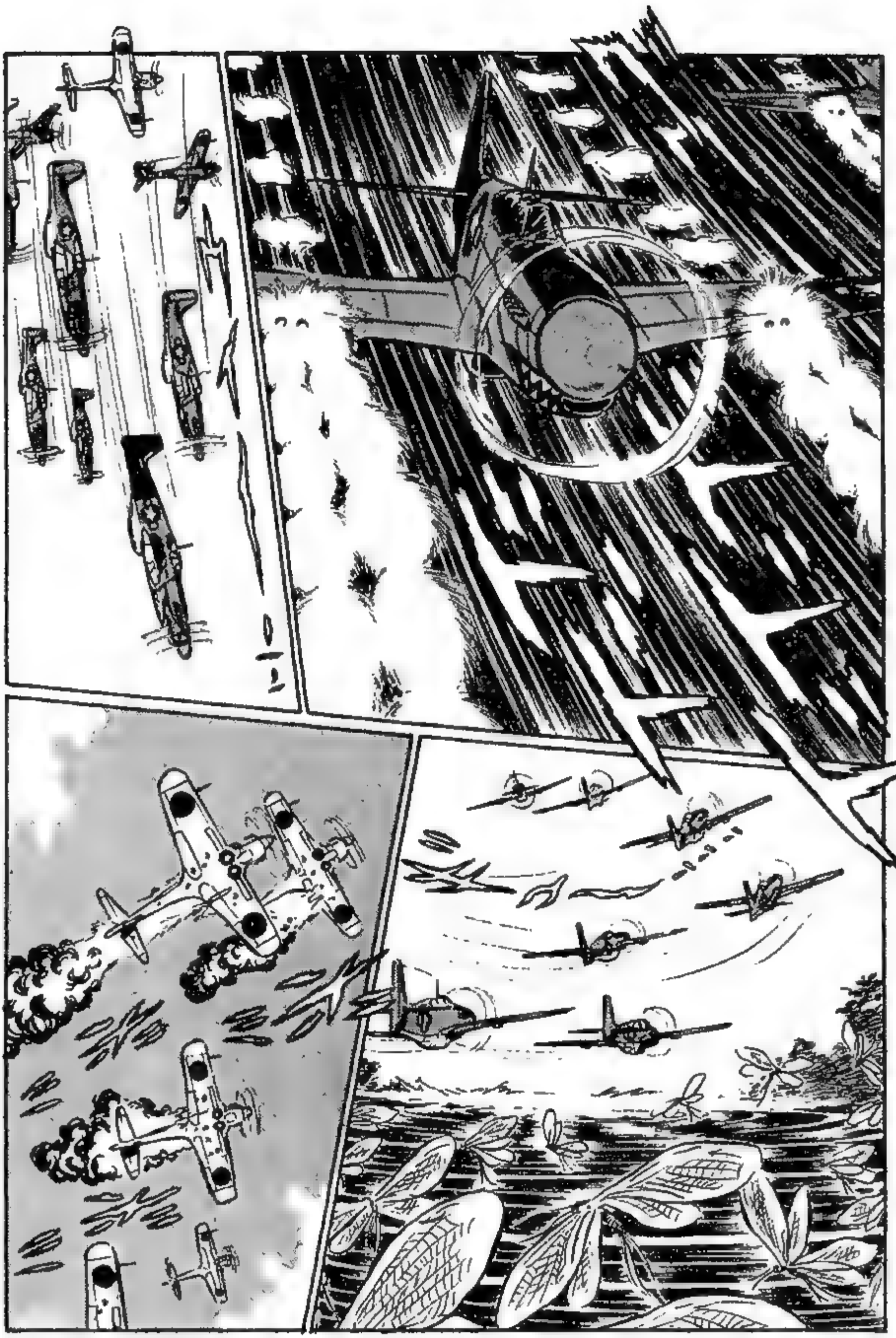
LOOK AT THAT MAYFLY ON YOUR CORK!

THE BOY DIDN'T KNOW HOW TRUE IT WAS, BUT I DID. I COULD REMEMBER SWARMS OF PLANES, LIKE THOSE MAYFLIES ....


THERE THEY GO.
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GETTING READY TO LEAVE, GRANDSON.
YES, YES ...
REMINDS ME OF THE WAR. OUR PLANES AND THEIRS FILLED THE SKIES THEN, JUST LIKE THESE MAYFLIES DO NOW ....
... THE SUN SPARKLING FROM OUR WINGTIPS BACK THEN ....


TO ALL AIRCRAFT IN THE SQUADRON! WE'VE GOT A FLOCK OF OSCARS, 500 METERS ABOVE THE RIGHT BANK OF THE MEKONG, OVER!
CRUISING AT 3,000 METERS. ALL PLANES ACCOUNTED FOR. NO SIGN OF TROUBLE. WE'RE ON OUR WAY HOME, OVER.

ROOKIES, DON'T FORGET YOU'RE 100 MPH FASTER THAN THEM AND FAR MORE MANEUVERABLE! FLY RIGHT AND YOU WON'T GET SHOT DOWN!
THESE ARE PROBABLY THE ONES THAT HIT THAT BRITISH SUPPLY DEPOT EARLIER, SO THEY'LL BE LOW ON FUEL AND AMMO!
EVERYBODY! ONE PASS, GO IN FAST, AND TAKE OUT AS MANY AS YOU CAN!
SIR! BANDITS, 8 O'CLOCK HIGH! P-51S, 6 OF THEM COMING IN FAST!!



DAMMIT! IF YOU'RE STILL FLYING CALL IN!

GOOD JOB! WE KNOCKED DOWN ALL BUT TWO OF THEM! NOW LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!

GOD DAMMIT!!

YOU, IN THE MUSTANG WITH THE BLACK TAIL AND WINGTIPS. SOMEDAY ... YOU'RE MINE!

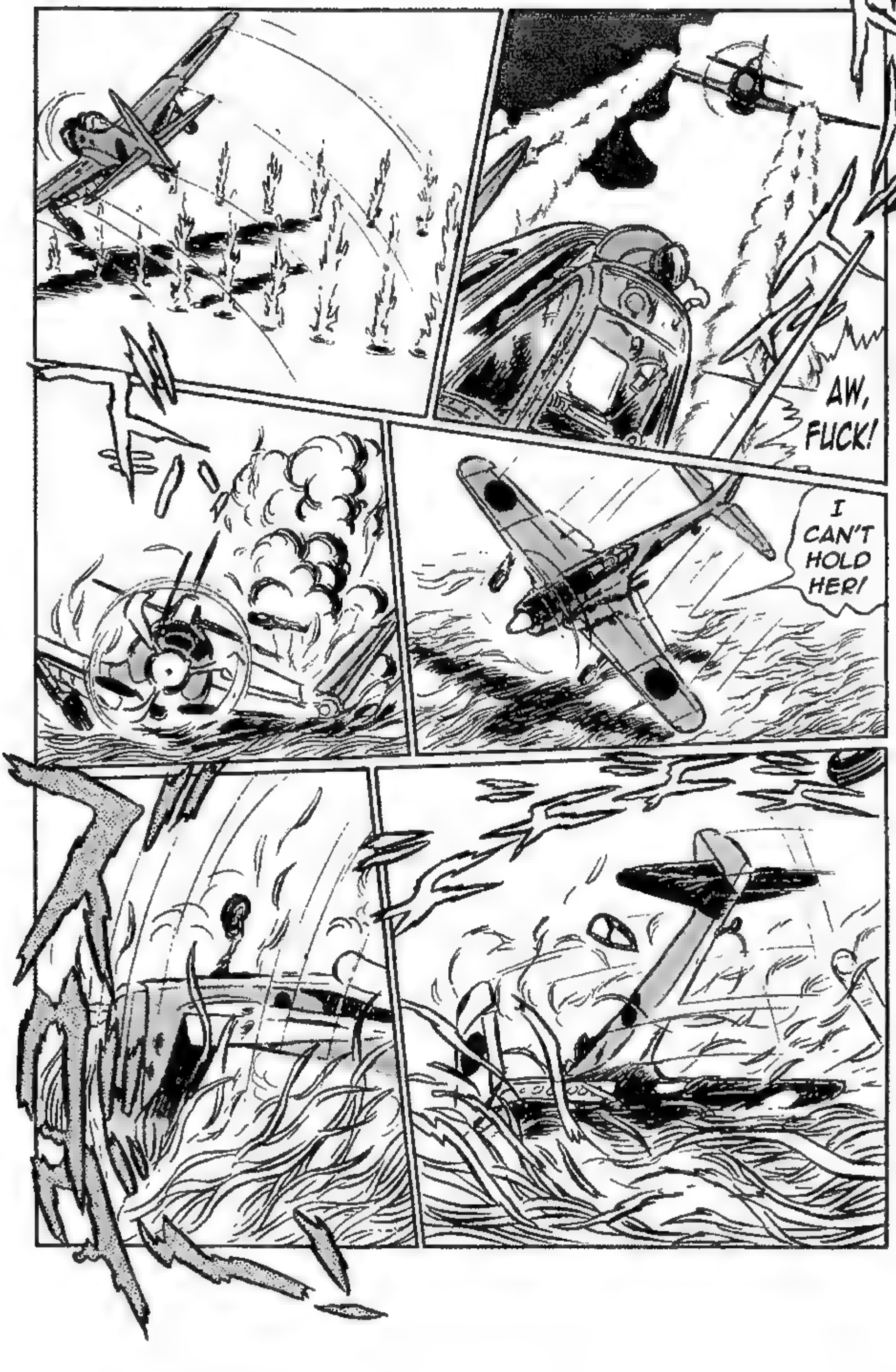
WELL, THAT BRINGS MY TOTAL UP TO 286 PLANES. UNOFFICIALLY, THAT IS.

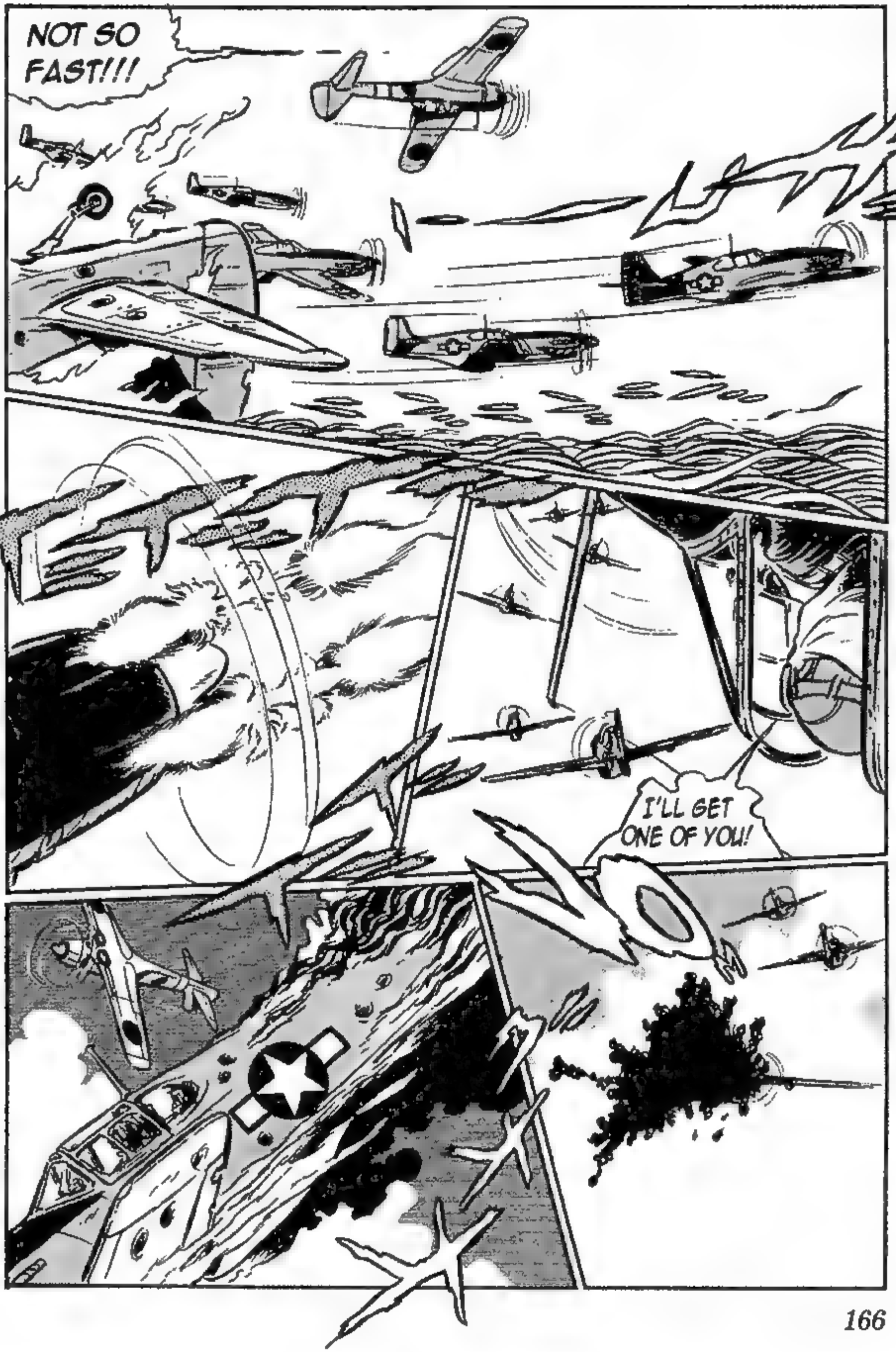
NOT IN THESE PLANES, SIR.

I'M GONNA GET THAT SUNUVABITCH SOMEDAY!

MEKONG SUNSET

I HEARD. THOSE P-51S TORE 'EM UP OVER THE RIVER.
THERE'S WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM.
OIL LEAK, OVER!
SHIMA, I'VE GOT ENGINE TROUBLE. CAN YOU SEE WHAT IT IS, OVER?
KAGEYAMA! PULL YOUR WHEELS BACK UP!! TO YOUR LEFT!!!
SHIT! THEY'RE BACK!


AW, FUCK!
I CAN'T HOLD HER!


NOT SO FAST!!!
I'LL GET ONE OF YOU!

LT. CAIDIN, SIR! THAT DAMN NIP GOT LUCKY!

WHO GOT SHOT DOWN, OVER!

HE ALSO KNOWS BETTER THAN TO FOLLOW US.

NO, HE'S GOOD. HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF US BEING SO CLOSE TOGETHER.

KAGEYAMA!!

OH MY GOD ...

PUT THAT FIRE OUT!

I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D GET IT.

OH, MAN ....

WHOA!

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME!

YOU LUCKY SUNUVABTICH! MUST BE AN OLD BOMB CRATER THEY MISSED FILLING IN.

I GOT THROWN OUT OF MY PLANE WHEN I CRASHED AND RIGHT INTO HERE!

IN THE SOAKING WET FLESH.

KAGE-YAMA?!

ME AN IDIOT?! THIS FROM THE GUY WHO TRIED TO TAKE ON SIX P-51S!

YOU FUCKIN' IDIOT! IF YOU'D LISTENED TO ME THEN YOU MIGHT HAVE SAVED YOUR PLANE INSTEAD OF ENDING UP IN THIS OUTDOOR BATH!

RIGHT BACK AT YA, YOU ... !!

OH YEAH?!? HOW'S THIS!!

YOU CAN'T EVEN THROW A GOOD PUNCH!

YOU SAYIN' I CAN'T FLY?!

YES SIR. WHEN WE CLEAN UP THANK YOU, SIR.

NOW AFTER YOU TWO HAVE CLEANED UP, I WANT ACTION REPORTS FROM YOU BOTH!

GLAD YOU'RE STILL ALIVE, KAGEYAMA. SHIMA, QUIT BEATING UP ON HIM.

HEY! THE TOWER'S LOOKING FOR YOU!

YES SIR.

NO ONE SAW 'EM UNTIL THEY WERE RIGHT ON TOP OF US!

ANYWAY, YOU'RE RIGHT. I DESERVED IT FOR BEING SHOT DOWN LIKE THAT.

BE GRATEFUL FIGHTING IN THE RANKS IS A SERIOUS OFFENSE.

HE ACTED LIKE HE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE BLOOD.

C'MON. I'LL HELP YOU OUT. LET'S GET CLEANED UP AND MAKE THOSE REPORTS.

GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.

MAN, THE FIGHTS WE HAD AND THE THINGS WE PUT UP WITH TO BE THE BEST AMONG US.

WE WERE ALWAYS COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER.

CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY. ME? I HAD SIX BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS.

THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR BEING AN ONLY CHILD.

BECAUSE I'M HUNGRY, AND BEING THE ONLY SON ALSO MAKES ME THE #1 SON AND #1 SONS GET THEIR WAY.

IT'S A LIFE, I GUESS. KAGEYAMA, WHY ARE YOU EATING SO LATE?

THAT'S WHY I THE WAY I AM.

THE HOSPITAL SMELLS, AND I'D SWEAR THEY USED LEECHES ON US.

YOU KNOW, THE WORLD IS SO BEAUTIFUL WHEN YOU'RE UP THERE IN THE SKY.

GOOD POINT.

FURTHERMORE, I NEVER HAD TO SHARE MY RICE WITH SIX BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS.

SAME FOR MY FOLKS.

I HOPE SO. I'D LIKE TO SEE ALL OF THEM AGAIN.

MAYBE THEY'RE ALL STILL ALIVE.

I'VE LOST TRACK OF MY FAMILY DUE TO THE WAR. I HOPE THEY'RE ALL RIGHT.

MAN, BUT THIS PLACE SEEMS SO EMPTY NOW ....

NOW THEY'RE FLOATING DOWN THE MEKONG TO THE SEA.

REMEMBER HOW THEY USED TO LIVEN UP THE JOINT? THEY FOUGHT WORSE THAN WE DID EARLIER.

THAT REMINDS ME. YOU KNOW WHO SHOT YOU DOWN? "MISTER BLACK TAIL" HIMSELF, CLAIRMONT "CLAIRE" HORANOT, FORMER FLYING TIGER AND A CERTIFIED ACE PILOT.

ASSUMING SOMETHING DOESN'T EAT THEM FIRST.

I THINK THAT 286 KILL BUSINESS IS BULLSHIT, BUT I CAN'T ARGUE THAT HE'S A DAMN GOOD PILOT. HE WOULDN'T BE AN ACE IF HE WASNT.

THE GUY CLAIMS 286 KILLS, COUNTING YOU, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITS THAT NUMBER IS UNOFFICIAL AND THE U.S. ARMY WILL ONLY LET HIM CLAIM 39.

TRUE. WE HAD ALMOST SIXTY PLANES IN THIS SQUADRON BEFORE HIM AND HIS BUNCH SHOWED UP IN THEIR FANCY NEW MUSTANGS. NOW IT'S JUST YOU AND ME.

THE AMERICAN WAS FULL OF SWAGGER AND ALWAYS THE BEST. THE GERMANS WERE DUMB AND WE WERE STUPID.

HE SCARES ME. LIKE THAT GUY IN THAT CAPTURED AMERICAN MOVIE WE SAW LAST MONTH?

YOU KNOW, IF WE CAN EVER SHOOT DOWN THIS HORANOT GUY WE'LL MAKE MILITARY HISTORY!

I GET COLD CHILLS JUST THINKING ABOUT HORANOT!

... THE FIRST ROCKET FIGHTER, THE FIRST BALLISTIC MISSILE, AND THEIR TANKS ARE SECOND TO NONE! EXCEPT MAYBE THE RUSSIANS, BUT YOU KNOW!

DON'T GET ME WRONG. THE AMERICANS MAKE A LOT OF GOOD STUFF, BUT SO DO WE AND SO DO THE GERMANS. I MEAN, THE GERMANS HAD THE FIRST JET ...

BUT IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!

SMART ALECK. THE COMMANDER WANTS YOU.

SHIMA! KAGEYAMA! YOU AWAKE?

WE ARE NOW.

BUT SIR!

YOU STAY HERE, SHIMA! I CAN RISK ONLY ONE OF YOU. KAGEYAMA, YOU'LL PULL RECON.

I'LL DO IT!

THERE YOU ARE! GROUND RECONS SAYS BRITISH TANKS ARE MASSING ON THE NORTH SHORE AT BANDRUM. THAT MEANS A NIGHT RECON.

KAGEYAMA, YOU'RE YOUNG, I'M OLD! DON'T DO IT!

BUT I'VE GOT MORE EXPERIENCE WITH NIGHT FLYING!

THANK YOU FOR BEING HONEST, SIR.

... I FLIPPED A COIN.

YOU ARE THE ONLY TWO LEFT. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH ...

RUN LIKE HELL! BYE!

KID, PLEASE! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF THE BLACK TAIL SHOWS UP?!?!

MAN, BUT IT'S DARK!!! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO IF I HAVE TO BAIL OUT?

BUT SIR! THE ORDERS WERE FOR KAGEYAMA TO GO!

THIS IS SO STUPID! I SHOULD BE THE ONE TO GO!

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO FLY TOWARDS THAT DIP UNTIL I GET THERE.

THERE'S THE DIP IN THE TREES FOR THE RIVER.

BANORUM ... THAT'S TWENTY MILES UP THE MEKONG FROM OUR BASE.

I WONDER IF THE BRITISH CAN SEE THEM FROM DOWN THERE.

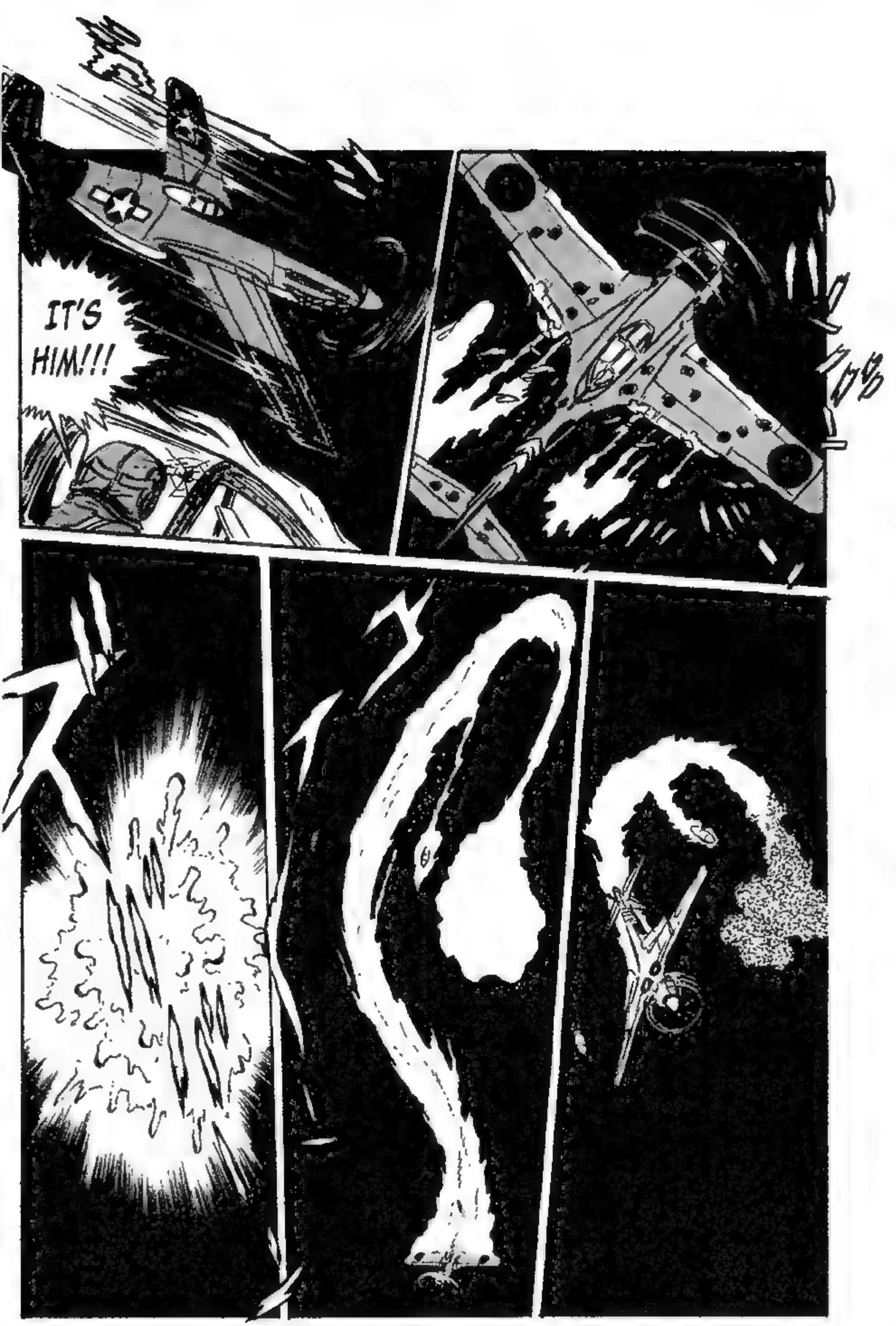
DAMN EXHAUST FLARES!

HOW AM I GOING TO DO A RECCE WHEN I CAN'T EVEN SEE THE TARGET?

ALMOST THERE. SHIMA WAS RIGHT. THIS IS DUMB.

OH SHIT!!!

I FEEL LIKE A KID IN THE DARK.


IT'S HIM!!!

... IT'S ... IT'S HIM ... IT'S ....

HEY, KID. GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.

SHIMA!

HOW ...

THEY THINK YOU BAILED OUT AFTER YOUR PLANE CAUGHT FIRE AND BEFORE IT CRASHED. OUR BOYS SAW IT AND GOT YOU BEFORE THE BRITISH COULD.

YOU KNOW, THEY SAY THAT RIGHT BEFORE THE END THE RED BARON GOT SO COCKY THAT HE STARTED TRYING TO GET EVERY EASY KILL HE COULD, JUST FOR THE NUMBERS.

SHIMA ... IT WAS HIM ... THE BLACK TAIL ....

OUR GROUND FORCES MADE AN ATTACK TO AVENGE YOU. KILLED TO THE LAST MAN.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

HE KNOWS THERE'S ONLY TWO OF US LEFT AND I'M MORE EXPERIENCED, SO THERE YOU GO.

AND YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT IT WAS, ME BEING AN EASY KILL.

WE GOTTA GET SOME OF THOSE NEW PLANES TO AT LEAST EVEN THE ODDS ...

THAT'S OUR PROBLEM TOO, YOU KNOW. SHIMA, WE'RE TRYING TO FLY OLD PLANES AGAINST NEW ONES.

... AND THEY GET K.O.ED EVERY TIME DUE TO THEIR THICKER ARMOR AND BIGGER GUNS!

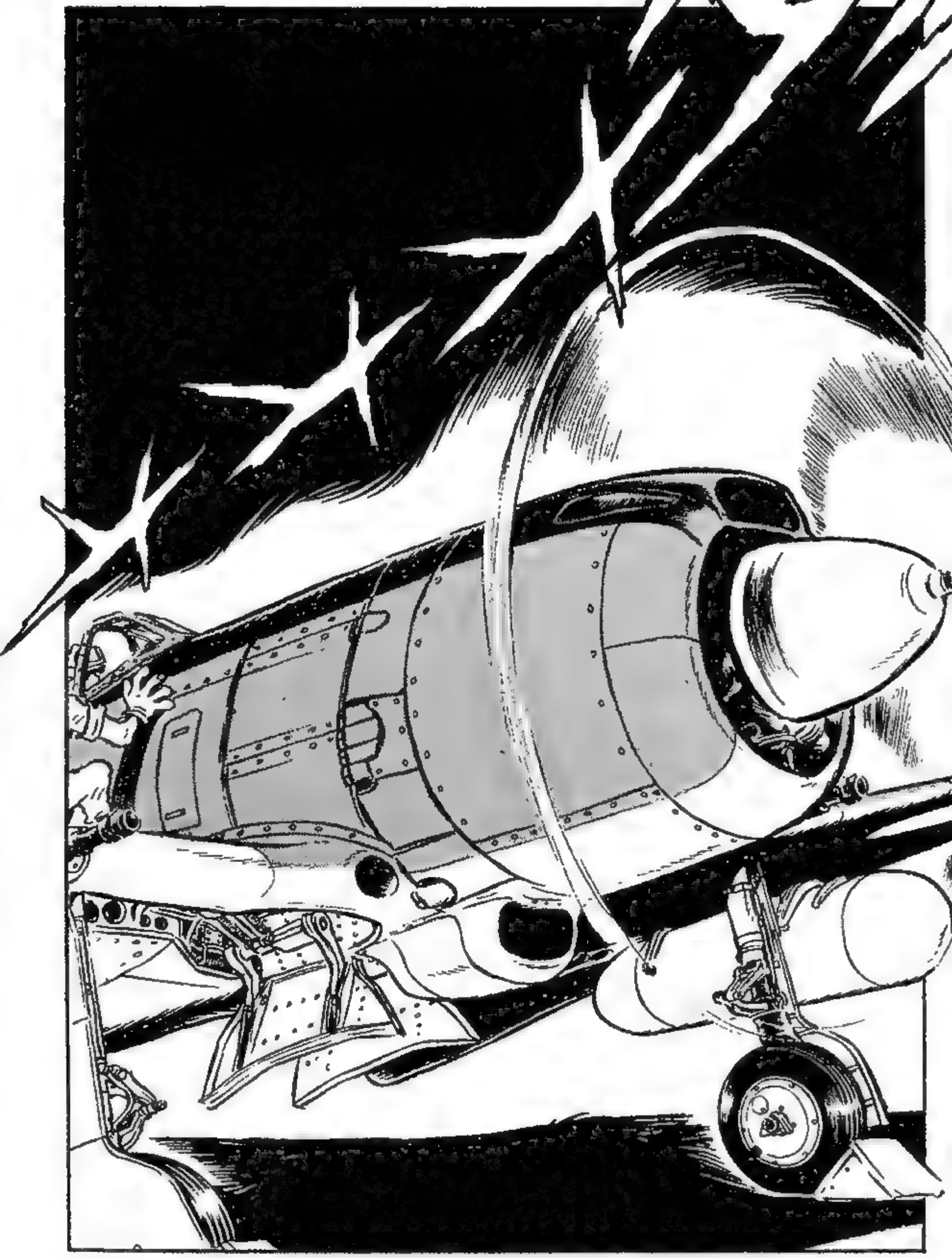
THOSE FOOLS KEEP PITTING OUR LITTLE TOY TANKS AGAINST AMERICAN AND BRITISH ONES ...

WE GOT MORE PILOTS AND NEW PLANES. HAYATES. AS GOOD AS P-51S.

WELL, KAGEYAMA OLD BUDDY, YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET YOUR WISH.

... OR YOU AND I WILL BE JOINING THE REST OF OUR SQUADRON IN THE MEKONG.

IT'S ABOUT DAMN TIME.



IT'S GOT MACHINE GUNS AND ALSO 20MM CANNON! WE FINALLY HAVE A BIRD TO EQUAL THE P-51 MUSTANG!

KAGEYAMA, THIS IS MY NEW BIRD. INTRODUCING THE NAKAJIMA KI-84 HAYATE. TOP SPEED 624 KM/H, THANKS TO ITS 16-CYLINDER, 2000 HP ENGINE!

THAT'S STUPID! HE'D BURN YOU!

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M FIXING TO DO? WRITE A CHALLENGE TO THAT HORANOT GUY AND HAVE IT SENT TO HIM BY SECRET MEANS.

BUT I WANT TO FLY ONE OF THESE RIGHT NOW!

HEY KAGEYAMA! GET BACK IN THE HOSPITAL! BAD BURNS LIKE YOURS TAKE TIME AND REST TO HEAL!

ARE YOU FUCKING NUTS?! AND WHAT WILL YOUR SIX BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS DO IF YOU'RE DEAD?!

I'LL TELL HIM TO LOOK FOR MY TAIL SIGIL* NEXT TIME WE GO UP.

... ONLY I'M NOT AN ARROGANT SON OF A BITCH ABOUT IT. I GOT A FRIEND WHO KNOWS HOW TO WRITE ENGLISH. HE'LL WRITE IT FOR ME

NOT IF I'M FLYING A HAYATE. I'M JUST AS GOOD AS HE IS ...

(*) UNLIKE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY PILOTS, IMPERIAL ARMY PILOTS WERE FREQUENTLY GIVEN THE LIBERTY TO PERSONALIZE THEIR AIRCRAFT WITH THEIR OWN CUSTOM TAIL MARKINGS, IN THE SAME VEIN AS THE "NOSE ART" FREQUENTLY SEEN ON AMERICAN ARMY AIR CORPS AIRCRAFT. THAT'S WHY SHIMA'S OLD AND NEW PLANES HAVE THAT FUNKY LOOKING SIGIL (SPECIAL SIGN) ON THEIR TAILS. NOW THAT YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN BE LOOKING FOR IT IN OTHER STORIES FROM *THE COCKPIT!* (R.M.)

I'M DOING IT FOR THE GUYS AND FOR YOU. REMEMBER THAT.
YOU'RE REALLY STUCK ON THIS, AREN'T YOU?
IF I DIE THEN I'LL COME BACK AS A HORSE AND PLOW FOR THEM.
YEAH. HEAL UP. SURE.
HEAL UP, KAGEYAMA MY FRIEND, OKAY?
IT'D BE BETTER IF I DID IT. HE DID THIS TO ME.
I'VE GOT THE SKILL AND NOW THE PLANE TO MATCH. IT'S DESTINY.
IT'S HORANOT'S SQUADRON, AND KAGEYAMA'S TAKEN YOUR PLANE!
SHIMA! WAKE UP!! ENEMY ON THE WAY!!!
THAT LITTLE SHIT ...
HE DID WHAT?!?!
(SNOT BUBBLE FROM SLEEPING)

KAGE-YAMA! DON'T DO IT!!

I MAY NOT BE AS GOOD AS YOU, SHIMA, BUT I'VE A BETTER PLANE NOW.

KAGEYAMA! YOU FUCKIN' FOOL!! GET BACK HERE!!!

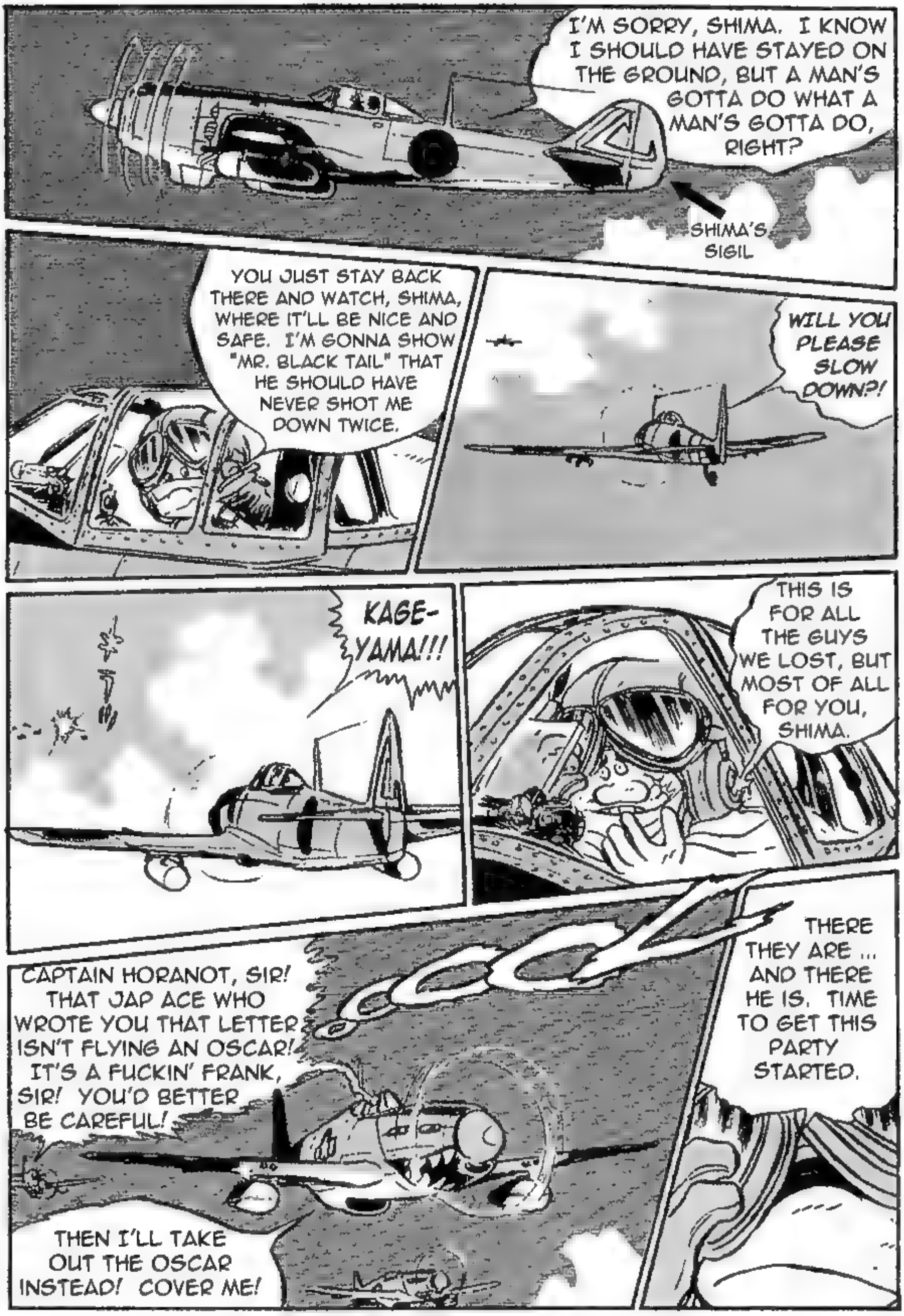
KAGEYAMA! THIS IS SHIMA! I'M FOLLOWING BEHIND YOU! PLEASE LET ME CATCH UP! OH, AND DON'T YOU DARE GET ONE SCRATCH ON MY NEW PLANE!

YOU HEAR ME?! NOT ONE SCRATCH!!

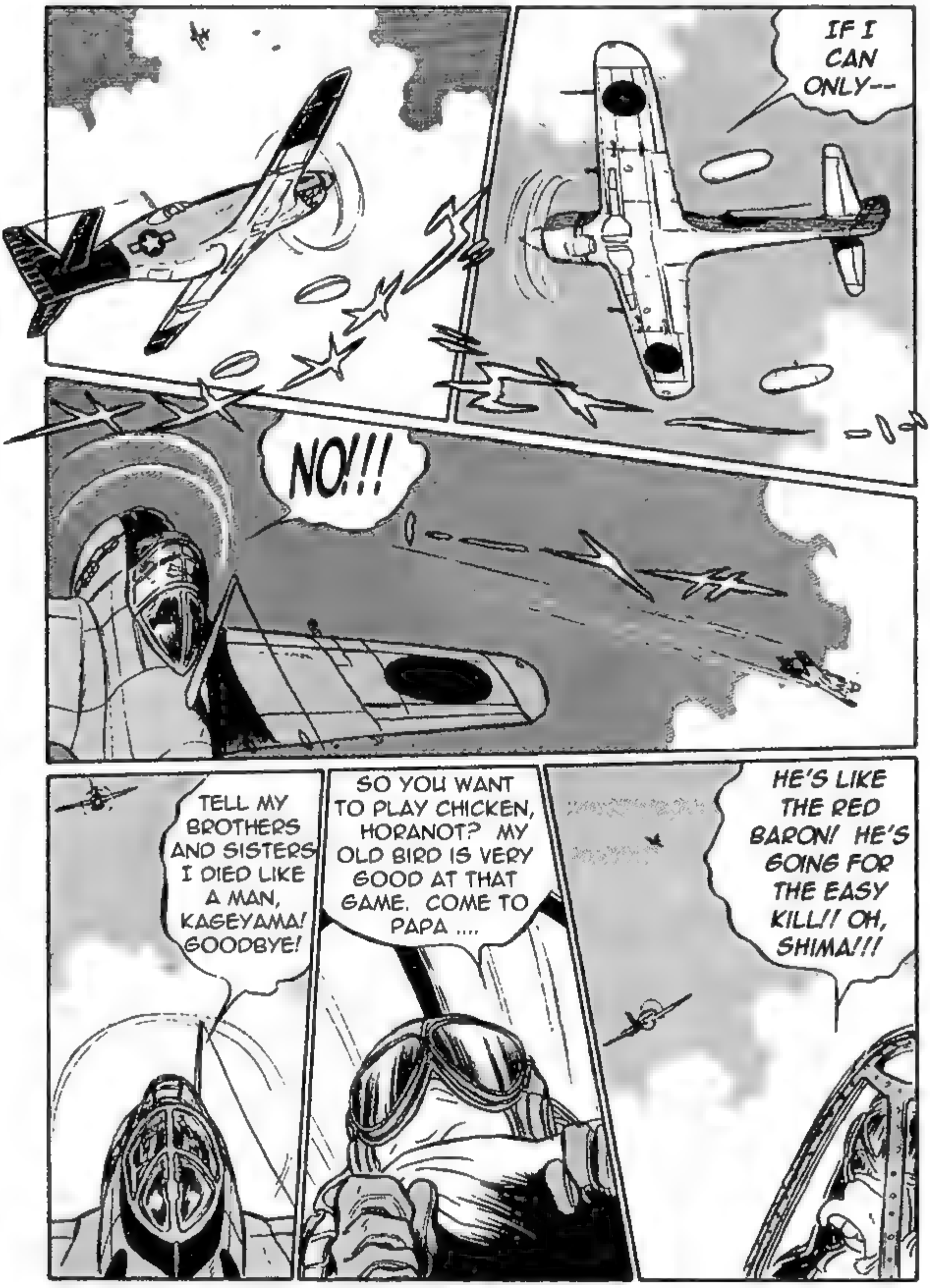
I'M GONNA GO HELP THAT IDIOT EVEN IF HE DOESN'T WANT IT.

GET ME A PLANE! ANY PLANE!!

MEKONG SUNSET


I'M SORRY, SHIMA. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE STAYED ON THE GROUND, BUT A MAN'S GOTTA DO WHAT A MAN'S GOTTA DO, RIGHT?
SHIMA'S SIGIL
YOU JUST STAY BACK THERE AND WATCH, SHIMA, WHERE IT'LL BE NICE AND SAFE. I'M GONNA SHOW "MR. BLACK TAIL" THAT HE SHOULD HAVE NEVER SHOT ME DOWN TWICE.
WILL YOU PLEASE SLOW DOWN?!
KAGE-YAMA!!!
THIS IS FOR ALL THE GUYS WE LOST, BUT MOST OF ALL FOR YOU, SHIMA.
CAPTAIN HORANOT, SIR! THAT JAP ACE WHO WROTE YOU THAT LETTER ISN'T FLYING AN OSCAR! IT'S A FUCKIN' FRANK, SIR! YOU'D BETTER BE CAREFUL!
THERE THEY ARE ... AND THERE HE IS. TIME TO GET THIS PARTY STARTED.
THEN I'LL TAKE OUT THE OSCAR INSTEAD! COVER ME!

NOTE – DROPPING ANY EXTERNAL ATTACHMENTS INCREASES A PLANE'S MANEUVERABILITY BY REDUCING ITS OVERALL MASS.


IF I CAN ONLY--
NO!!!
TELL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS I DIED LIKE A MAN, KAGEYAMA! GOODBYE!
SO YOU WANT TO PLAY CHICKEN, HORANOT? MY OLD BIRD IS VERY GOOD AT THAT GAME. COME TO PAPA ....
HE'S LIKE THE RED BARON! HE'S GOING FOR THE EASY KILL! OH, SHIMA!!!

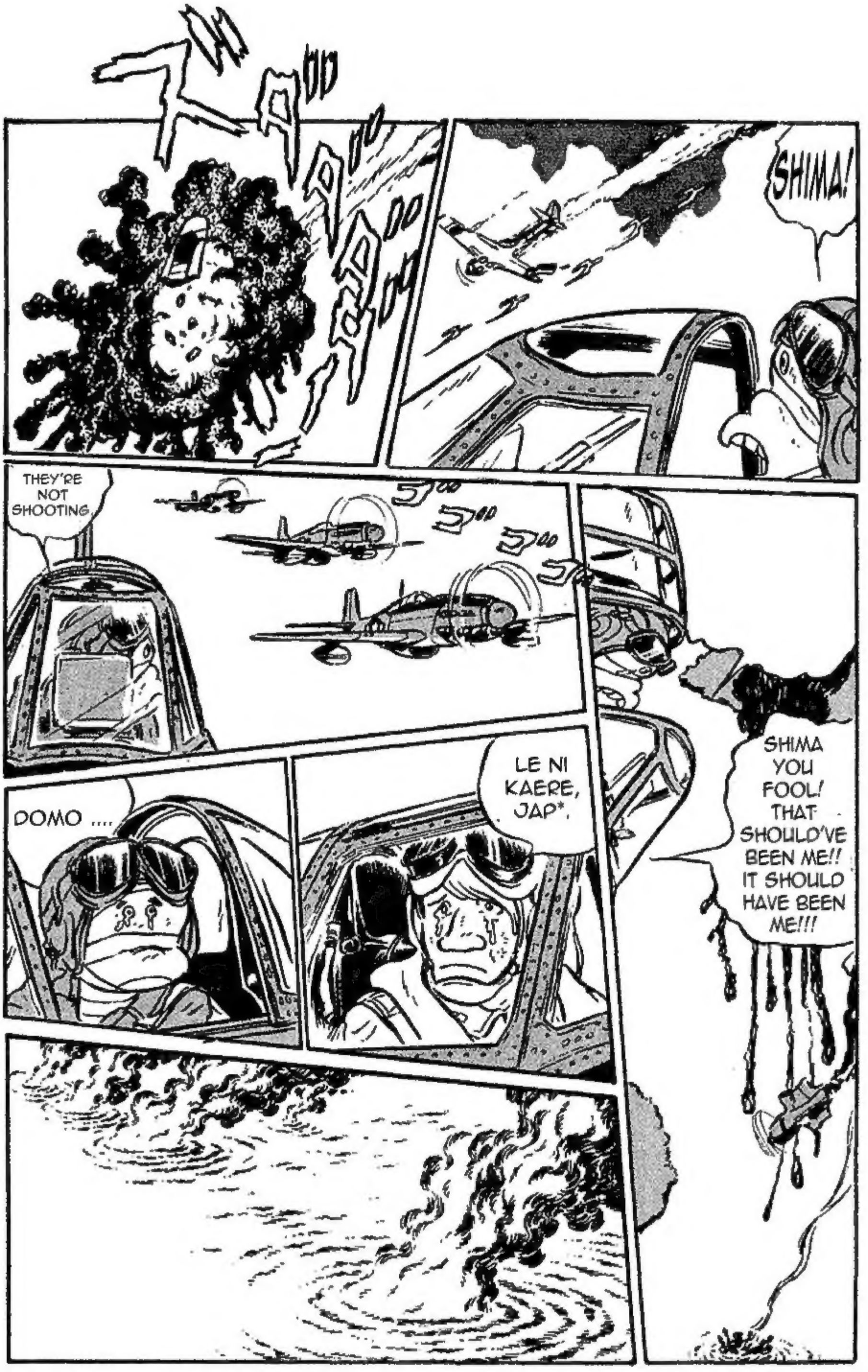
CLARE HORANOT! I AM YOUR ANGEL OF DEATH, COME TO TAKE YOU TO THE GREAT BEYOND!!

THIS FUCKIN' JAP IS CRAZY! HE'S NOT GOING TO BREAK! WELL I'M NOT GOING TO BREAK EITHER! I'M CLAREMONT HORANOT THE GREATEST FIGHTER ACE WHO EVER LIVED!! NOW YOU DIE!!!

KOOM

THE END

... SO ... SO
IT ENDS ....



*"LE NI KAERE, JAP" – "GO ON HOME, JAP."
"DOMO" – "THANK YOU."

THE MEKONG STILL RUNS AS IT ALWAYS HAS CARRYING TO THE SEA WHATEVER FLOATS ON ITS TOP.

THE SHADOWS OF THE DEAD ARE STILL THERE, LIKE THE MAYFLIES THAT LIVE AND DIE ON ITS SURFACE.

WILL THE CYCLE EVER END? I DON'T KNOW.

ENDE

YES, YES ...

GRANDPA, IT'S LATE. I'M GONNA GO TAKE A NAP.

YES, YES.

YOU ONCE TOLD ME THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED IN THIS RIVER DURING THE WAR.

THOSE TWO YOU TOLD ME ABOUT, YOUR BEST FRIEND AND THE AMERICAN ACE. DO YOU THINK THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE?

YE-- .....

MEKONG SUNSET

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 2, 1974>

MANDELISMS

Before I even begin I want to apologize to everyone who reads this. Google Translate AI failed me in many places with this one, so there is far more interpolation on my part than I would have preferred. I hope I got at least the gist of M-san original tale, since I know for a fact that I didn't get the letter.

We're in a new physical location during World War II we haven't visited before in this series, and that's the Mekong River basin. Part of that forms Burma's (modern day Myanmar's) extreme eastern border, with China on the opposite bank and the northern part of French Indochina (modern day Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam) to the south. P-51A Mustangs were sent by the Americans in support of the British to what was called the CBI Theater (China-Burma-India) of the war, specifically the final or P-51A-10 variant which M-san correctly depicts, and they operated there from 1944 to war's end.

A side note here. M-san did a number of insect-themed tales of which this was but one. Many of those were later collected in the manga anthology *Yozigen Sekai* (The Four Dimensional World), which is the companion to the earlier M-san manga anthology *Yozigen Dokei* (The Four Dimensional Clock).

At its most basic this is a tale about the two survivors of a Japanese air squadron decimated by an American ace pilot and his squadron with its supieror P-51A-10 aircraft and how this pair deals with that. In particular it focuses on the plight of Kageyama, the younger and less experienced of the two, who feels dishonored in getting shot down twice by the far better American ace. Given the code of bushido that the Japanese military followed during the war this was a big deal. Kageyama "lost face" in a big way, so he HAS to make that up in order to restore his honor. This explains what he does and why later in the tale. The theme of lost honor is one to which M-san will return time and again in later tales, with his protagonists in those finding their own unique ways either to deal with or more often than to restore it in whatever way they can.

Claremont "Claire" Horanot, the American ace pilot, is an obvious nod by M-san to the real life person of General Claire Chenault, the founder of the Flying Tigers, and like his real life inspiration the fictional Claire Horanot also flew with the Flying Tigers. The bit about his being compared with the famed Red Baron, Manfred von Richtofen, is my own addition but it's based on a very real wartime phenomena, when those who win a lot sometimes become obsessed with their fame in various ways and almost all of which eventually lead to their fall and sometimes even their death. Again please forgive me for the intrusion (thank you very much, Google Translate AI).

iron tombstone　　Battlefield Manga Series ②

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